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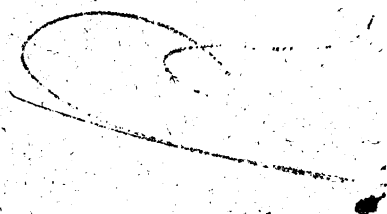
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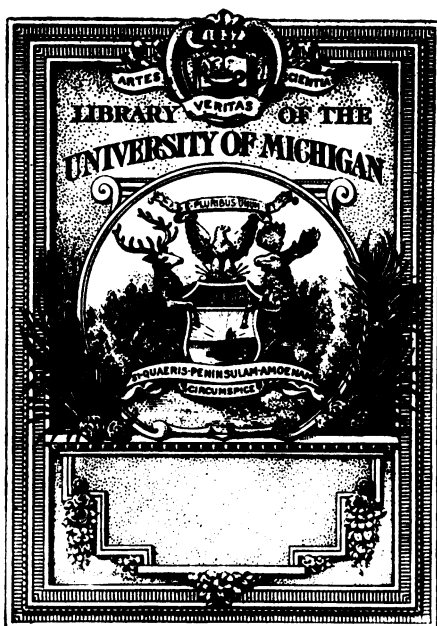
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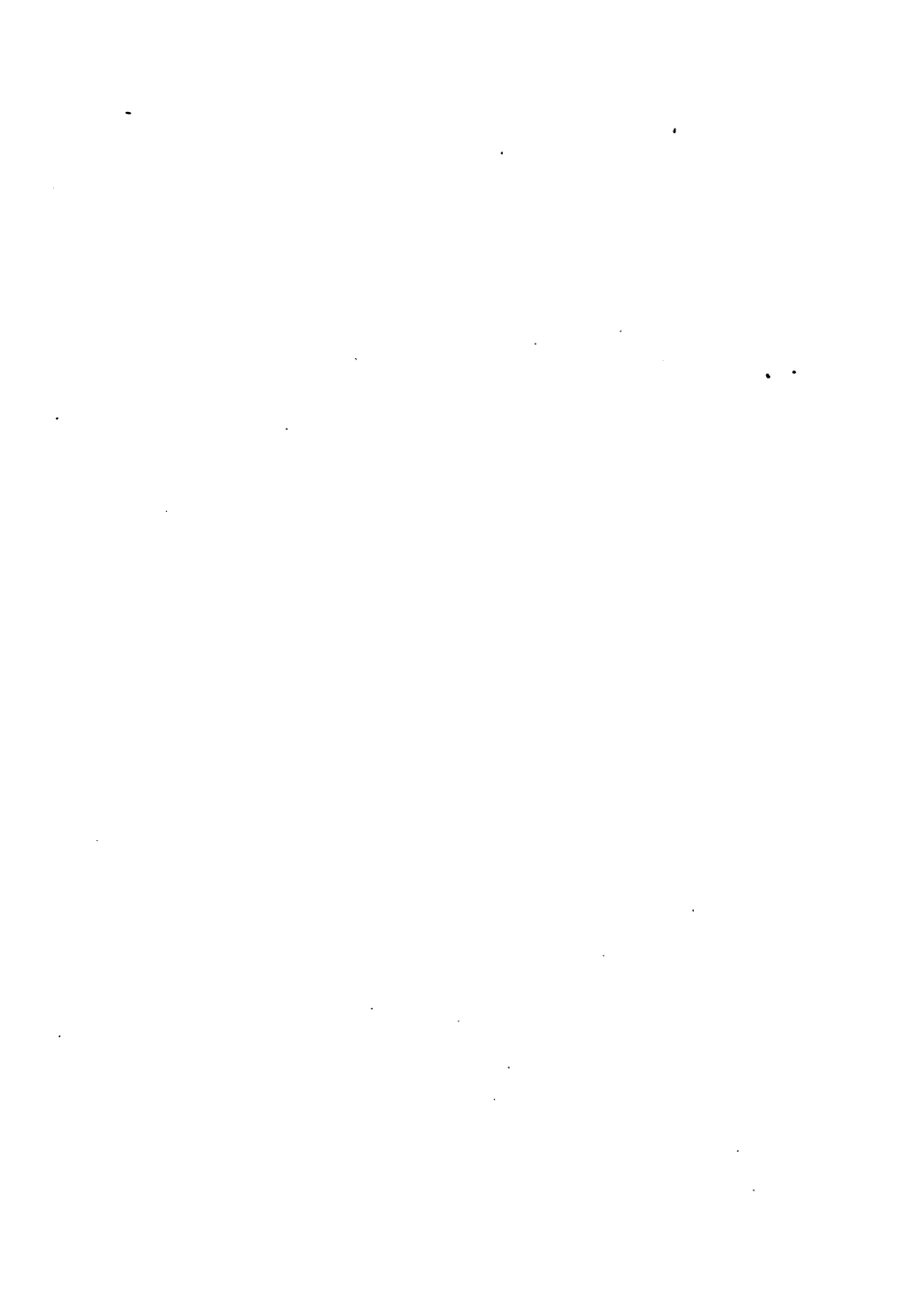


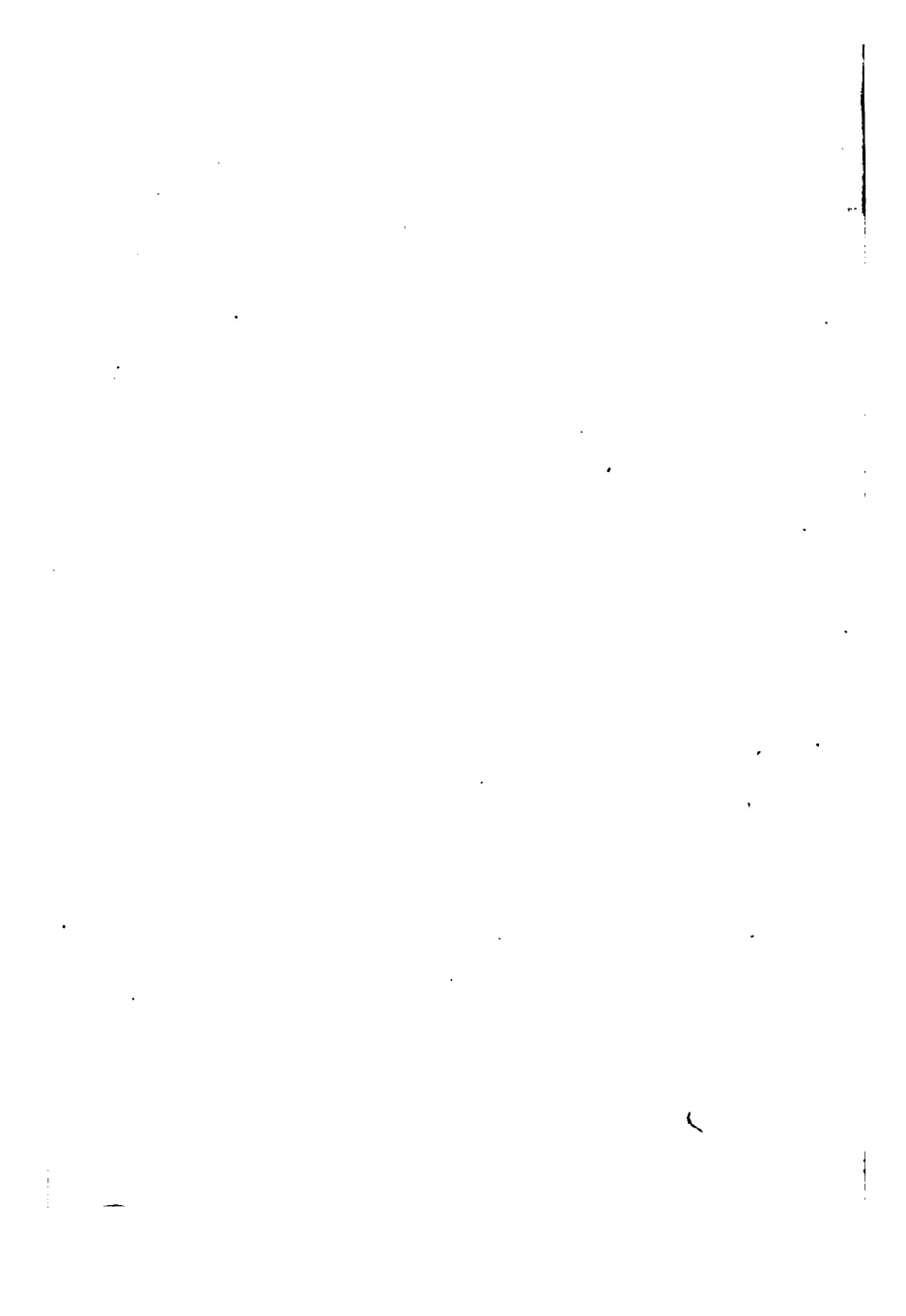




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THE SERIOUS WOOING
A HEART'S HISTORY

"SEE YOU NOT GOLDYLOCKS, THE PURPLE STRUMPET THERE,
IN HER YELLOW GOWN AND GREEN SLEEVES? THE PROFANE
PIPES, AND THE TINKLING TIMBRELS?"

"TRIUMPHS FOR NOTHING AND LAMENTING TOYS
IS JOLLITY FOR APES, AND GRIEF FOR BOYS."

"L'HUMANITÉ NE SUBSISTE QU'À LA CONDITION DE NE POINT
RÉFLÉCHIR SUR CE QUI EST ESSENTIEL À SON EXISTENCE."

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The Serious Wooing

A Heart's History

By
John Oliver Hobbes

Craigie, Pearl Marynesa
Author of

"The School for Saints,"
"Robert Orange," "Tales," etc.



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THE SERIOUS WOOING

A HEART'S HISTORY

CHAPTER I

"Trop belle pour moi, hélas, hélas ;
Trop belle pour moi, voilà mon trépas."

"The flesh is frail : my lord doth know it well,
That when he comes with his enchanting face,
Whate'er betide, I cannot say him nay . . .
Lacy for me, if he will be my lord !"

"Le bon goût est l'œuvre suprême de la civilisation, le plus intime vêtement de la nudité humaine, le plus adhérent à la personne, le dernier qu'elle garde après qu'elle a rejeté tous les autres."

"THAT is divinely beautiful," exclaimed Archie Wardle.

He stood in an octagonal saloon leading from Mrs. Odo Ceppel's celebrated drawing-room (copied from that music-room called the *Paradiso*, and designed by Mantegna and Costa for Isabella d'Este).

Wardle held, in his fat white hand, a small gold ewer, enamelled and set with gems.

"Divinely beautiful," he repeated : "a genuine Benvenuto Cellini."

"I am glad you think so. It cost a lot of money," said Mrs. Ceppel.

"Money? *chère Madame*. What is money to you?"

"I have never so much as I want—never. All our family are the same. You know the old rhyme—

*The lending Jews and the spending Ragots
Brought princely Holt to waste and faggots.*

I am a spending Ragot. It is born in me, Archie."

Caroline sighed as she spoke, and pressed two fingers loaded with rings (she affected diamonds) against each eye lest a solemn, if passing, thought should cast the faintest shadow of a wrinkle. She was pretty in the fresh style, with a swift flow of colour in her cheeks : parted lips : a small tip-tilted nose :

and waving chestnut hair. Of her family, she had made the richest, most successful marriage. Odo Ceppel had millions, it was said, and he was neither hideous nor vulgar. On the contrary, good-looking, young, and kind. Caroline was right to watch, with scrupulosity, those distressing corners of the human countenance where lines will form the repulsive design of crow's-feet.

"If we are spending Ragots, we are also perverse Ragots," she went on: "take Rosabel, for instance. Poor Rosabel!"

"And what is Rosabel doing with herself lately?"

"She has taken up with some new friends, the Luttrels, a brother and sister. Do you know them?"

"Not Jocelyn Luttrell?"

"Lyn Luttrell,—that's the man. He's clever, I believe, but odd."

"He was at Balliol, and gave poor Jowett a lot of trouble with his Ruskinian notions. Wanted to make life into a Turner

landscape, Good Lord ! Jowett used to say, 'Luttrel is not a sentimentalist but an idealist. He's bound to commit some crime.' Can't you hear the dear old boy ?"

"Who are the Luttrels ?"

"There must be money. His father owned granite quarries. A rumour reached me, too, of an interest in hemp. Stone and rope : it sounds solid enough. The good burgess, however, is a come-down for Rosabel. He is hardly her sort. Where did she pick him up ?"

"At some meeting or other. Where's the sense ? But he attracts her in a strange way. And she certainly attracts him. Marie, my maid, says that he passes this house a dozen times in the week. I wonder how it will end ! Rosabel's life has been sad and tiresome enough already."

"Appalling ! When I think of Shortclough, my blood boils."

"It was all Mama's doing. She made her accept him."

"But everyone knew that there was insanity in the family. Shortclough was a *crétin* from the beginning. I can see him now as he looked on their wedding-day,—his swivel eye rolling horribly, and that wobbly under-lip turned down as far as the chin-line."

"That would not matter to Mama. He was a Peer. I often wonder why Mama is so keen about titles. If she had been a Miss Snooks, one could understand her feelings. But for a woman who is in the *Almanach de Gotha*—Odo says it is too extraordinary. Poor Mama !"

Mrs. Ceppel permitted herself to feel the most sincere compassion for her younger sister, the Countess of Shortclough, and her mother, Lady Ragot, daughter of the twelfth Baron Dundrum, and widow of the late Sir Algernon Ragot, Baronet, formerly of Holt Park, Suffolk.

"What is the latest account of Shortclough ?"

“He remains about the same: the doctor says that his new idea is to ask everyone—‘What date do you make it?’ He is always about five days out of the proper reckoning. The other day Mama went to see him. When he asked her, ‘What date do you make it?’ she tried to humour him, and answered, ‘The first of February.’ And he said, in the most knowing, sly way, ‘I have heard that tale before!’ His appetite is splendid: he can play croquet sometimes, and she is sure that he is perfectly happy. The nurse is such a nice woman. Her husband shot himself, so she must have had a lot of experience. Short-clough has quite taken to her. It is such a mercy.”

“What is to become of Rosabel?”

“Don’t ask me! To tell the truth, I am surprised that she hasn’t taken the law into her own hands. I am worried to death. But, for Heaven’s sake, keep all this to yourself. You see it would be such a

triumph, in a way, if she could steer clear of complications."

"A triumph for whom?"

"Well, virtue and all that. Surely you understand."

"Wroxall, I suppose, is still madly in love?"

"There's no danger in his direction. She always says that he looks like a fat coachman turned into a thin Groom of the Chambers. Isn't it naughty of her, and rude?"

"Rather true, all the same. Poor old Wroxall."

Mr. Wardle tittered as loudly as his very tight corsets would permit, and stared at the photograph of a middle-aged, smooth-faced gentleman attired in the uniform of an honorary Colonel of the Normorland Fusiliers. (Third Battalion.)

"Danger in *his* direction, Carrie! I shall die of laughter. I know I shall. He! he!"

"Don't say anything before Odo, will you?"

"Catch me putting my oar in!"

The door, at this moment, was opened, and Lady Shortclough followed by two gentlemen, entered the room.

"We had just given you up," exclaimed Archie: "I suppose it was an awful crush."

"You shall hear all about it in one minute," said Rosabel, going to the fireplace: "the Kingspoke admirably—I think he intends to govern, and the Queen had a diamond girdle down to her toes. They both wore robes, and it was all heroic—as it should be. I thought of Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott. These are the pretty pleasures of life. I wish there were more of them!"

She had been to the opening of Parliament, and, as the Court was in mourning, she wore a black gown, her smallest tiara of diamonds, pearls round her neck, and a

long sable cloak. Was this the gift of a Russian prince? Friends, shielding plainer breasts with mere ermine, asked this question.

There are many portraits, and three are famous, of the Countess of Shortclough. One, painted by Lenbach, gives her a German air—as though, in poetic fashion, she were something to eat, white, soft, sweet, her lips two roses, and the like. The other, by Sargent, endows her with all the nervous vivacity of American women. She would appear but two degrees from intangible, the face elongated, the eyes, grey, bright, verging on a gaudy blue: one pale stark hand holds, pitifully, a green riband as though it were dear life barely worth the clutch: her limbs, lost in masterly brushwork signifying Brussels lace, wander downwards to a velvet carpet—conveyed by a stroke. This splendid composition fills the lady's lovers with dreariment: "the sensual idol of their day" had, one

would swear, no heart and less flesh :
“That’s not a passable carcase,” said one
base fellow at the Private View. Rosabel,
for her part, loved the picture : it was her
passion to sit near it and court comparison—
point for point—by sunlight, electric light,
or what you will. The third portrait, by
Constant, gave more than many notions of
what a beautiful mistress ought to be. She
sits, queenly, on a Byzantine throne : there
is a sort of heavenly rhetoric about the
whole composition : the famous chestnut
hair is more sunny than her blazing diadem :
her cheeks, declare with brilliance, that er-
rors of the blood, not of the mind, might
drive the most rare creature to heroism :
the proud nostrils all but quiver with the
fervour of a pink, celestial thought or two :
it is not life-like, but it is marvellously
suggestive of womanhood dressed for con-
quest, for tragedy, or for a family gallery
of painted ancestors—some by right of ad-
venture. Rosabel, the being, was exqui-

sitely pleasant to look at, recalling that fair, of whom a poet sang—

“ I did but see her passing by
And yet I love her till I die.”

In years, three-and-twenty : in stature, a goddess : in colour, a blushing carnation. The chestnut hair has been mentioned. An envious rival owned that it fell to the girl's knees. (She followed her once to her room to see the braids brushed out, and, entering, gave them a sharp tug out of innocent playfulness.) As for her ladyship's grey eyes,—those who consumed their beauty with thinking, declared them too shining to be particularly intelligent. Intelligence, we all know, is troubled, and seldom clear. Mr. Archibald Wardle felt the heart within him beating wildly as he surveyed the adorable Countess on her knees by the fire. This for Lyn Luttrell ! It was hard enough to see her mate with an imbecile Peer,—there were ever so many

other Peers—at least as rich, if miserably less willing to marry dowerless perfection. One could laugh at the infatuated Wroxall,—too late in coming up to the scratch and now broken-hearted for his fatuous delay. But Lyn Luttrell! Merely young, merely strong, merely clever, merely well-to-do,—a respectable burgess. What was the world coming to?

“Where’s Susie?” asked Rosabel, looking round the room.

“She is still at her lessons,” replied Caroline: “Fräulein says that you make her idle.”

“I want to see Susie,” urged Rosabel, nevertheless.

One of the two gentlemen who had accompanied her entrance, and suffered complete eclipse as a result, rang the bell in obedience to a signal from Caroline. He was brother to the two ladies, but he was small, bullet-headed, and very like a jockey. In his opinion, Rosabel was a handsome

fool, and Carrie the one young married woman in London who could talk sense, and be trusted into the bargain. "My sister Caroline," he would remark, "has her head screwed on the right way." There was a third sister, Susan Arabella Idonia Ragot, still in the schoolroom.

"Keep her out of Rosie's paws," was the brother's prayer: "Rosie will be the ruin of her." To-day as he rang the bell, his eyebrows worked furiously: the bullet-head tossed in wrath, but the lovely, doting Rosabel smiled, drew the gloves from her "paws" (treasures of symmetry), and sent a twinkling glance at Wardle.

"Don't fill the child's brain with gossip," begged Carrie: "she has the wildest ideas as it is. Mademoiselle caught her dressed up in all your Covent Garden Ball things last Sunday morning."

"Darling angel," murmured Rosabel.

"But it is too bad," exclaimed Sir Courtenay.

"The child is seventeen," said Rosabel :
"at her age I was married."

"Oh, you, yes!" replied the gentle Baronet, "but do you call that desirable?"

Caroline expressed a wish that they would not quarrel, and ordered a servant, who came in at that moment, to tell Miss Susie she was wanted.

"By the bye, Wroxall and I want to fix up this trip to Palermo. Are you coming or not?" asked Sir Courtenay.

Rosabel looked at Lord Wroxall, another eclipsed glory, and shook her head.

"I don't care to leave London just now. One's friends are here, and the weather is good."

"That's nonsense," said her brother. "the Readings are there, and the Gasperds. It will be an ideal thing altogether. You simply can't back out."

"I hate trains and travelling."

Wroxall, rousing himself from an ec-

static contemplation of the divinity, blurred out,—

“We needn’t go so far as Palermo.”

A howl from Courtenay: “Oh, don’t climb down! I am not going to budge. It’s so vacillating.”

“A mere change of plan is not vacillation,” said Wroxall, conscious of his weakness and its usually fatal issues. He was plain, almost bald to the rim of his collar, highly grotesque in outline. Frightful men, repulsive men, deformed men have been extravagantly loved, but the gargoyle cut goes harshly against that instinct which calls the phoenix to the turtle. The “fat coachman turned thin Groom of the Chambers” was a kind description of his lordship. Some harsher critic, taking classic cover for coarse truth, might have sought out epithets in Rabelais. The happiness he knew was of the pastoral, saturnian kind, for the dunces of all nations thought him ridiculous, and women seemed to re-

gard him as a thoroughfare for sisterly affection. They suffocated him with their purest kindness—till his strong passions and heart of gall were enraged to the utmost possibility—on the safe side of reason.

“You ought to go abroad, Rosabel,” said Mrs. Ceppel; “the English spring never suits you.”

“What could I wear?” exclaimed her sister: “none of my clothes would do. I should have to order new clothes. My hat-bill is already forty-five pounds—just a few plain little mourning hats”—

“It isn’t at all like you to consider the expense,” observed Sir Courtenay.

“Not when I wish to do anything. But when I don’t particularly wish”—She curled her lip, and had half-assumed a fine air of preoccupation when she heard footsteps racing down the corridor outside.

“It is Susie!” she exclaimed, with a smile like the first flash of daylight.

The girl—a miniature Rosabel clad in black serge—flew in. Two gleaming pig-tails, bronze-coloured, reached to her knees: her complexion dispensed itself in splendid blushes: the marks of recent weeping gave a dangerous melancholy to her eyes. Being a small person, she rushed, with her arms out, to the glorious Rosabel, hung on to her waist, and, from that armoury, looked defiance at the others.

“The sweet! the precious! the pet!” murmured her protectress: “horrid, ugly, scratchy old frock: beastly pig-tail doesn’t suit you: my pretty darling made a fright: won’t have it. Frumpy old Fräulein: weak-minded Mademoiselle.”

While these soothing words were being cooed deliciously into the victim’s ear, tender fingers were unbraiding the odious plaits.

“Look at that!” exclaimed Lady Shortclough, shaking loose the hair with natural

delight in its beauty: "but, Carrie, she's been crying."

"Howling!" whispered Susie, nestling closer, and pressing a quivering lip against her darling's arm.

"The Akensides asked her to skate with them at Prince's. Of course, I couldn't allow it. But she can go to see Benson in *Coriolanus* instead."

"With Fräulein!" said Susie: "Fräulein spoils everything!"

"I will take you myself," said Rosabel: "we can have a box and invite a party."

"Not for the child," exclaimed Caroline, "surely not. You forget that she isn't out yet."

"She is 'out' enough to meet Beauleigh," replied Rosabel. She referred to the youngest unmarried Duke in England.

Mrs. Ceppel took her beating gladly. She looked around, and beheld every eyebrow at a pleased, acquiescent angle.

"Is Beauleigh in town?" she asked, out of graciousness.

"I met him to-day. We talked for ages by the fire while I waited for the carriage. He said: 'Arrange something for to-morrow night, and I'll do it. A dinner, the play, and supper afterwards.' He's a dear boy. Write the telegram, Susie. *The Duke of Beauleigh, Drawne House, Whitehall.* Say, 'Feed eight of us and take us to Benson.'" She hesitated, and then said—"I shall ask Jocelyn Luttrell."

"Jocelyn Luttrell!" The entire party spoke in unison.

"Yes. I must have someone who amuses me."

"This is the first time I have ever heard Jocelyn Luttrell called amusing," said Archie Wardle.

"Oh, don't have *him*!" implored Carrie. "He isn't one of us, and I believe that he laughs at us really. When he stopped at Lembolton with the Hodcasters, he spent

half the time mooning about, in a sarcastic way, by himself. And he called their pheasant-shooting 'pure footle,' and said he would as soon take a pop-gun into a poultry-yard. Captain Mainville was furious."

"Luttrel is used to real sport in Hungary and Austria," said Rosabel: "he's a fine shot. And then he fought in Cuba and the Greek War. A flock of tame birds, frightened to death, could hardly appeal to a man who has killed Turks!"

"How do you spell Bewley?" asks Susie, from the writing-table.

"B-e-a-u-l-e-i-g-h," answers Sir Courtenay. "How ignorant you are for your age!"

Rosabel walked to the piano, and began to turn over some of the music, which consisted of songs from *The Messenger Boy*, *San Toy*, and *Florodora*.

"I am expecting Luttrel this afternoon," she said: "so Courtenay may as well gather up his legs and dance off. You pay a price for stalking on altitudes! You bore, Cour-

tenay ! For the rest, in spite of Archie's sniffs, Luttrell comes of the best blood in all Durham. He is the one genuine aristocrat I know. He won't bend, he won't flatter : he does not follow the mob, and he has no fine facility in mouthing : words stick in his throat."

"It's a pity they don't choke him," growled Courtenay. "I glanced at his book the other day. Dangerous nonsense. Claptrap."

Mrs. Ceppel rose from her chair, and, pretending to arrange a fold in Rosabel's veil, whispered—

"You are giving yourself away. Do be careful."

Wroxall, too, ambled up with a good deal of anxiety on his face.

"You like to say wounding things," he began. "I don't suppose you mean them, or I wouldn't be so fond of you."

"What's the use of you—or anyone else—being fond of me?"

"I will admit that it's very unhappy," said her old friend: "one doesn't get much change out of it."

Caroline left them, and went back to her tea-table, where Wardle, as he munched sweet cakes, sat watching a lump of sugar dissolve in a spoonful of cream.

"Symbolic of much," said he: "especially sentimentality. I am a philosopher."

Wroxall, at the piano, with his elbow on the book of *Florodora*, continued his reproach—

"People are beginning to change their minds about you, Rosabel. I think you ought to know it. This fellow Luttrell"—

"What about him?"

"I am sure he is gentleman-like and clever and all that, but you give him a lot of your time. You have attended all his lectures."

"Because they were given at Anne Broum's. Anne particularly asked me to go."

"The Treatment of Criminals is not a ladies' subject. What do you care, what does Anne Broum care, about Social Ethics? Would you go twice a week to hear *me* lecture on Political Economy?"

"No," she said cruelly; "yet that doesn't prove anything! The fact is that relatives do not merely betray the secrets of one's life, but their effects—judged in each case according to guess-work. They know nothing: they twist, misrepresent, and misinterpret every action, every interest. I'll live alone. I can digest the whole world at a gulp, but I won't be spied on while I swallow it."

"Spied on?"

"Yes. Why does that blundering idiot of a Wardle interfere with me? And take Carrie. She will flirt (with the Parables in brackets), and languish over her Prayer-book. She's a droop-er and a kneel-er, and she has a genius for repenting delightfully after some very stupid sin. You don't

know the ferocity of a dull woman under a grievance. Carrie would give poor dear Odo and all his money for a twopenny halfpenny handle to her name. Kind to me? She isn't kind. I'll never say so. No one is kind to me. You all hate to see me happy or interested. I am to live in a lonely paradise—sustained by an occasional chorus from distant drawing-rooms to the tune, 'Oh, she's respectable!' Do I care for Social Ethics? Very much. They have destroyed my life!"

Rosabel delivered this tirade in a low, musical voice, which would have made any fish-hag seductive. Each note was golden, and so uttered, neither slang nor plain words, neither temper nor unreasonableness, offended the ear.

"If you wished to do a thing, you would do it—in spite of all the ethics going," said Wroxal: "this is what we feel. And the best evidence of your recklessness is this new violent friendship for Luttrell."

"Is it more remarkable than my old violent friendship for you?"

"They have got used to me," he said sadly; "they know it is all on my side. People have such sharp instincts unexpectedly. They make mistakes, but as often as not they are right. I have never compromised anybody!"

He hung his head and blushed in a kind of shame; yet he was happy to be near her on any terms: he fixed his longing eyes on her pretty hand and kissed it, for the ten thousandth desperate time, in his imagination.

"That way—I can't pretend to such advantages as Luttrell," he continued, with a good deal of bitterness, "and as he has to push his fortune in the world, he will 'run with the hare and hunt with the hound.' He won't consider anyone else. These Socialists are all unscrupulous, and the educated among 'em are the worst of the bunch—because they must know better!"

"Don't say the word too much, Jim. I won't stand it."

"I don't want people to talk."

"That depends, I think, on the kind of people and the kind of talk!"

She left him and went over to Susie, who was watching them both with a young girl's half-divining blindness—a thing truer in its judgments than the long experience of human folly can warrant. She knew that Rosabel and Wroxall were always bickering: that no one could make her adored sister so angry as Jim: all the same, thought the girl, Rosabel liked him best of all—next to Mr. Luttrell. Affection can dissemble itself in every respect—except in respect of fault-finding, and the right to speak truth is assumed by the least encouraged, and tacitly granted by the least encouraging lover, whether man or woman. Susie, groping her way toward knowledge, knew the feel of despair and wild devotion; knew the tone of trust

altogether transcending the kindest regards of formal amiability.

"Why are you cross with Lord Wroxall?" she asked, with unconscious boldness.

"Because he is such a duffer. I can't tell whether he's my most tiresome acquaintance or my best friend. It would be dreadful to do the poor old silly an injustice."

Stooping, she pressed her own cheek to Susie's, and sailed out of the room. This waiting about for Luttrell's call was unbearable. He was due in another thirty minutes. Let them pick him to pieces—if they could—till then: let them exhaust their spleen, venom, jealousy, snobbery, and meanness in such lies as they could invent and foist upon each other: let them detail the lunatic gossip of common-rooms, clubs, and the Lower House: all that was not for her. "Lacy for me, if he will be my lord!" was the clarion thought in her ladyship's proud bosom.

The corridor leading to her bedroom was adorned with some of Odo Ceppel's old mezzo-tints in black-and-gold frames—

“*MARC ANTONY, beating Chalkstone over the Beacon Course at Newmarket, 7th of May 1774.*”

“*CHATSWORTH, by Blank, out of Fairy, winner of numerous races and matches, with the jockey up: by F. Sartorius, 1770.*”

“*The terrible horse TRENTHAM, winner 11 times without losing a match, and beating many of the most capital horses in England: by G. D. Stubbs, 1772.*”

There were many more, but these were the three she paused to notice.

“He,” she thought, meaning Jocelyn Luttrell, “knows everything about racing, too. They can't snub him at any point!”

She locked her door, and studied his photograph, which showed, in the homely phrase, a fine figure of a man, with a virile countenance. There was nothing immediately or crudely picturesque in his looks, but he bore a strong resemblance to Van-

dyck's portraits of Lord Strafford—especially that in the Wentworth Woodhouse collection—which shows the tragic cavalier in a plain black robe, dictating to his secretary. The harsh, dark features and the gloomy, swarthy face, lit up by a tender, eternal grace in the eyes, were so much the same as Luttrell's as to seem his actual likeness. Rosabel called up a vision of the pretty fellows whom the women of her hearth considered pardonably worth every sacrifice. Not one of them would forgive her for preferring Luttrell. Not one of the gentle ladies aforesaid would plead a word in her defence. She pressed the photograph to her heart. "I'll ask no defence, dearest," said she: "I'll want none." This was outrageous, but she went on to murmur worse,—fond oaths of everlasting constancy, undying worship. Woman will swear much to her beloved, but all such vows are few and feeble in comparison with those promised fervently

to her own heart. Having committed these licensed perjuries, Rosabel took up a second treasure,—a notebook containing some notes taken down at Luttrell's lectures. The first page began well, with a quotation from Robert Owen to the following effect:—

"The poor and the uneducated among the working-classes are TRAINED to commit crimes, which they are afterward PUNISHED for committing. . . . The remaining mass of the population are INSTRUCTED to BELIEVE, or at least acknowledge, that certain principles are unerringly true, and to ACT as though they entertained the strongest conviction that they were GROSSLY FALSE; thus filling the world with FOLLY and INCONSISTENCY, and making society a scene of insincerity.

"By far the greater part of the population belong to or HAVE RISEN FROM the labouring classes, and by them the happiness of all ranks—not excluding the highest—are very essentially influenced."

"Read Turgenev, Mazzini, Carlyle, Browning, Shelley, Hegel, Tacitus, La Fille Élisée, Karl Marx, Ruskin, John Stuart Mill, Taine,

Husley, Henri Beyle, Georges Darien, Life of Abraham Lincoln, etc.

"An educated army will always have a great advantage over an uneducated army."

There was one more page of writing, and the rest of the little book—got up to look like an early Florentine affair—was a blank—a spotless blank of the very best writing-paper.

"Miss Luttrell is in the drawing-room, my lady."

"Miss Luttrell?"

"Yes, my lady."

This bit of dialogue between Rosabel and the servant—with a door mercifully separating them to hide her ladyship's too visible perturbation, annoyance, and disappointment. His sister! his religious, perennially protesting sister, a grisly frump, great in moral seriousness, dowdy beyond praying for.

"I only wish to goodness I might be left alone," exclaimed Rosabel, in much peevish-

ness. "They will all have their knives in her. Why did he let her come?"

While descending the staircase, she had an illuminative thought that Miss Luttrell (her odious, too appropriate, name was "Garde"—short for Hildegarde)—that Garde Luttrell had ventured to call on some private, not unimaginable mission.

"Will she call me names? Will she curse me or appeal to me?"

Questions of the kind directed to a turbulent and erring conscience stir up that courage which, by the righteous, is called the devil's own.

"I shall tell no lies," continued the lady's soul to herself: "I shall take no nonsense or interference: if I can throw dust in her eyes, so much the better for her and the worse for me. If she cannot be taken in, then she must try to raise her mind to my pitch. She shall have the truth. But oh, Lyn, why did you let her come?"

When the Countess re-entered the draw-

ing-room, one would have sworn she had been drinking strange philtres of audacity, and was magically gifted to slay dragons as you would catch butterflies—by means of a little green gauze at the end of a stick of bamboo.

CHAPTER II

"Tis not the linen shows so fair :
Her skin shines through and makes it bright :
So clouds themselves like suns appear,
When the sun pierces them with light :
So lilies in a glass enclose :
The glass will seem as white as those."

"a close friend

. . . is court rhetoric :

A wife, mere rustic solecism."

"Nature is juster than we. She takes into account what a man brings with him into the world, which human justice cannot do."

"I would fain see the fool, gossip : the fool is the finest man in the company, they say, and has all the wit."

HILDEGARDE LUTTREL was seated most awkwardly in the vast room under "Venus stealing Cupid's Bow," by Guido, a work mentioned by Malvasia in his *Felsina Pithice Vite dei Pittori Bolognesi*. This picture, classed always in catalogues

among rare and beautiful objects, formed an ill background for Miss Luttrell's erect bonnet, which branched up in three forks or uncurled plumes, demonstrative of Court mourning clumsily translated. The spinster was spare, with a fine gaunt chest, plunging black eyes, and no nonsense discernible about the knees. These, on the contrary, jutted out (in a square manner) covered, with much decency, by black cashmere cut, as a skirt, not foolishly long below the ankles. These, however, were good to an incredible degree, and the resolute foot, small and slender, had something romantically aristocratic in its sheer chaste elegance.

"Her foot is better than Caroline's," was the first thought of her noble antagonist: "I believe it is almost as good as mine. Thank God!"

Then aloud: "Dear Miss Luttrell! Do come nearer the fire."

Miss Luttrell has, unfortunately, all the

fire she wants in her own outraged feelings. She will remain where she is, with her modest back in close opposition to Guido's demoralised hussy. Signs of the times, indeed !

"I saw you at the House of Lords," said Miss Luttrell, with a withering glance at the false Madame's beautiful face : "I was with Mrs. Pomfret" (she named a Bishop's wife) "looking over the staircase. It amused us to hear your friend observe—as we passed through the Hall—'Who are these people in bonnets? I wish they would get out of the way!'"

"Ella has no manners," replied Rosabel, mortified.

"Who is Ella?" asked Miss Luttrell.

"Lady Hunston."

"And who *was* she?"

"A Miss Tungay."

"Tungay?" Protestantism has its pedigrees."

"Very rich, you know."

"How?"

"One forgets," said Rosabel evasively. She had once heard something about money-lending at exorbitant rates.

"But her ill-breeding will remind one," replied Garde Luttrell.

"You are like your brother—a plain-dealer."

Here was a coming to the point without shilly-shally. Miss Luttrell was pleased. Protestantism when well hit can send out sparks of justice.

"My brother!"

"I suppose you are very proud of him?"

"I never allow myself to be proud of anybody."

"How wonderful to have one's self under such control! Now I am all sorts of things—whether I allow it or not."

Smiling, she hurled this javelin and hoped the wound might be mortal but seemly—without bloodshed. Hildegarde's grim breast, however, was tough, and the needle-

javelin glanced off. Miss Luttrell, like all sincere creatures, trusted entirely to the inspiration of honest wrath for her weapon-play. Jealous women, however, are found to have but two methods of warfare. One, the most general, is to attack the male Cause. She will tell her foe stories of the man's unworthiness. "He is a horror, my dear: did you hear how he treated poor Blanche, and that silly little Margaret? He cannot be faithful. How lucky it is that you see through him!" Or we have: "He is a mass of selfishness. He is utterly cold and without affection. Self is his god, I assure you. I pity the woman who is fool enough to put her trust in his love-making. If he were the last man on earth, I wouldn't." Or this, for example: "I can feel for you. I once thought the same. Try him for seven years or so, darling,—a lucky number, at that!" Then there is a better move: "No man, he least of all, could appreciate you. If you could see the crea-

tures he really admires, and loves—after a fashion—for a month apiece. An orang-outang! Nothing else.” This wholesale condemnation of the Cause is antiquated. It ought to be dropped by a Council of Matrons. The other method is full of risk, but, in severe chivalrous cases, it has sometimes been attended with victory. Briefly, it is a Panegyric of the Cause,—an impassioned, whole-souled admission of his glory, gifts, irresistibleness. Tears are not uneldom mingled over this superb, heart-rending theme. Miss Luttrell, whose love was stronger than her fear, her jealousy, or her prejudices, spoke kindly enough—

“My brother,” said she, “is much nicer than I am. He is impulsive. You two must be alike.” She coupled him thus with Rosabel in her thoughts, and now, in her speech, acknowledged, as it were, their spiritual union, at anyrate. To one so deeply infatuated as the Countess this use of the plural (whether maledictory or the

reverse she cared not) was a sweet compliment. She accepted the situation, and said—not with prudence—

“I believe Mr. Luttrell and I are alike.”

“But you live in different circles, Lady Shortclough. He belongs to the sphere of independent thinkers: you are among the fairies and officials. Fairies are charming: officials are indispensable. I am the purest of Tories in that opinion. But—for Jocelyn, all this sort of thing—!”

“He ought to keep in touch with society—if he wishes to influence it.”

“That is too small a field—society follows the Gallery, my dear. It plays to nothing else, and it is at present what it was in France under the second Empire—the *monde* and *demi-monde* are associated in newspaper accounts of fashionable doings, in scandalous gossip, in luxury and extravagance. It is almost shocking to common sense. I am not shocked other-

wise. Nothing shocks me : little surprises me. But a man like my brother could have as little desire to reform society as he has to alter the habits of the domestic pigeon !”

“ You encourage his radicalism ? ”

“ He is no Radical. He is a Democrat : a citizen of the world. He knows that men can be equal only by right of soul. Each soul is precious, but each one is not precious for the same reasons. Next to a lunatic, Jocelyn loves a criminal. They, too, poor creatures, are co-heirs with Christ. Christ entered paradise with a thief. Yes, Jocelyn is a Democrat.”

“ So are we all—in that sense.”

“ I should be worse than mad if I thought such a thing ! ” exclaimed the incorruptible lady : “ witness your own friend’s remark about people in bonnets. She voiced the snobbery of her kind. Pardon my bluntness. All the Luttrels are blunt—as blunt as Luther.”

Rosabel proved herself no pale-spirited woman, and smiled bravely.

"Is that a warning?"

"Yes," said Miss Luttrell, looking her well in the eyes: "it is a warning. And now I have nothing on my conscience."

She stood up and accomplished a little gruff smiling herself—much as a dog will growl out appreciation for a good bone from a dubious hand.

"You are a very beautiful person," she said: "and Lyn is a man. But he's a Luttrell-man. Don't fit him into the common standing-room niche—he'll smash the whole choir! I'm odd? Well, I live so much alone. Good-bye, my dear *citoyenne*. I hope we shall meet again under happier circumstances."

"But I am quite happy," said Rosabel, showing her dimples.

"Nothing proves it," replied Miss Luttrell, more grim than ever.

When she had gone, Lady Shortclough

turned to Carrie's group who were tittering together over "another of Rosabel's Intellectuals."

"What a sight!" exclaimed Carrie. "She must be a Poor Law Guardian. What *can* you see in these weird people? Is she Mr. Luttrell's sister?"

"And isn't she rather a damper?" asked Wardle. "When the middle-classes are clever, they're so damned ugly! *Tran-chez le mot.*" He toyed, as he spoke, with an uncut copy of Anatole France's *M. Bergeret à Paris*—its yellow paper covers exquisitely concealed in a little case of beautiful old silk. Much more would have been offered, no doubt, on the subject of Rosabel's amazing caller, if Jocelyn Luttrell himself had not arrived at that moment. He had encountered his sister on the staircase, and perhaps this was the cause of the frown he wore as he entered the room. Wardle thought him "a bad-tempered beast," and said so afterwards to

Wroxall. He greeted Luttrell, however, as the others did, with great civility. They were all a little afraid of him, because he had an imperial manner of seeming to put them at their ease—which was disconcerting and unexpected to a circle accustomed to regard itself as the innermost. “D—n it all,” said the elegant Sir Courtenay, also in confidence to Wroxall, “the brute patronises *us*.” Rosabel, however, thanked all the gods that Luttrell was in his haughtiest mood that day. Her vanity still shivered over the comments passed on Hildegarde. She despised Wardle ; she thought Carrie foolish ; and yet she found it difficult not to value their opinions. The world’s estimate of Mrs. Odo Ceppel and Mr. Wardle was very high. They had done well for themselves. Archie, quite early in his wise career, had married the one heir between himself and the Copplestone Barony to a robust childless widow. She would outlive four generations, easily. Mrs. Cep-

pel had made the great match of her season. Carrie and Archie, therefore, were chartered critics of the less fortunate and astute. They knew, through and through, the society which they had worthily conquered, which they piously loved. Neither Carrie nor Archie ever misread a letter, under-valued a favour, overdid a kindness, neglected a rising power, or dropped too hurriedly a falling one. "People, like metal interests, come up again," was a Wardle axiom. "Look at iron," was a further note on this humane rule. Archie had never denied Luttrell's ability. Once he had been magnanimous enough to confess "that he could love him for the enemies he had made." Wardle knew the market value of brains, character, and independence. For the market-place, be it understood; for the Capitol, for the Camp, for the Forum, but not for lovely Rosabels, not for wayward beauties married disastrously. He could not have brought him-

self to own that men of Luttrell's stamp were too much in earnest for women of Rosabel's nature and training. Columbine in tulle and garlands is not well-advised to dance on the war-horse's back. For her, the circus-steed schooled to the business : he can feign the broken heart, the death-blow, and, rising gingerly, canter off to his stall in perfect time to the darling valse from *San Toy*. Columbine, the while, can balance herself on one rare toe, always touching his especially prepared saddle. But a war-horse is less courtly. He will have no pirouetting on his spinal column. In Wardle's plain English, the case came to this : Rosabel would surely play the devil with Luttrell, and Luttrell would not stand it. Luttrell's "not standing it" would mean a dreadful, an annihilating row. Let her be wise in time, therefore, and stick to her own lot. They knew how to live a possible existence. These warnings were clearly expressed in Wardle's smile, in Carrie's

ungracious politeness, in Wroxall's shy, nervous stare when Luttrell came into the room. No man driven to play the part of unwelcome intruder can do more than look defiance and disdain, bear himself with pride, and convey the reason for venturing where he is not wanted. Luttrell's first immediate glance at Rosabel expelled the others from his view of life.

"I have seen you twice already to-day," said he: "on the way to the House, and on your return."

"Where were you?"

"At the Horse-Guards, and I have caught another attack of Militarism—the more severe because it is quite against my theories of civilisation. But there are moments when I dread seeing the world thoroughly civilised. I feel the enchantments of barbarity."

"I should call the opening of Parliament about the most civilised thing going," said Rosabel, a little hurt.

“No, we are still awfully near the ape and tiger.”

All women fear and suspect irony when they are able to recognise it. Rosabel was too flattered by the passionate, all but mad, admiration in Luttrell's eyes to trouble much about his conversation. Many had been in love with her, but some had been interesting at the expense of their emotional strength, and others had been emotional at the cost of their wits. With Luttrell she felt herself being swept away by a kind of nervous emanation which, like a wave seizing sea-weed, caught up her heart and seemed uncertain where to fling it. At present she was at the curve of the wave where it rises, trembles, gathers fresh impetus, and would almost appear to rest before the culminating dash shorewards. She followed him to a corner out of ear-shot from the rest, and was half-wretchedly, half-proudly certain that she was altogether in his power. How would he use it? She

hoped he would abuse it. She was a weak woman in a sense, and craved the domination of a will she could be sure would never break. She had been reading "The Statue and the Bust," and one verse pursued her—

*"Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,
If you choose to play! is my principle."*

Would Luttrell choose to play?

"You have my letter?" he said at once. Mrs. Ceppel, to show her disapproval of the whole proceeding, withdrew to the billiard-room, taking Archie and Wroxall. Luttrell cast a swift glance of contempt in their direction, murmured "Bartholomew Fair" under his breath, seized Rosabel by the wrist, and said again—

"You have my letter?"

"You hurt me.—Yes, it ought never to have been written."

He threw back his head and laughed.

"We must go together to the fiords of the North and live in some cabin built on a rock. Mountains and reefs all round us; seagulls darting past our windows. Then you can tell me about the letters I ought not to write! You want me to talk Italy and the *amitié amoureuse*: we can go to see *The Messenger Boy*, have supper at the Savoy, and settle that little question of our souls on the first wet day in Ascot week! No, *ma mie*: our love is for the North, the storm, the gales—where the Summer is one long day, and the Winter one long night. We must get out of this stale mephitic atmosphere."

"I hate the North."

"You won't when you know it. I am sure there is a wintry sphere in Heaven—snow gardens and hills of ice."

"But you don't believe in Heaven."

"More honestly than many who chant their Creed once a week. You can trust all my doubts."

"I trust you, at anyrate. I am not so sure of myself."

"You need only be sure of me."

"You mustn't ask me to decide yet. We have known each other five weeks—not more. I have known Carrie—and the rest—all my life. Something is due to them. I must consider them."

"Why consider them when we have the conclusion of it all quite fixed?"

This virile dislike of phrase and paraphrase, euphemisms, and the graceful assumption of misgivings seemed uncouth in her ladyship's judgment.

"You are so accustomed to crude people," she said: "you bully—in a sort of way."

"It saves time."

"But I am weak, and I have fears—not about you, dearest, never, never about you, but about myself. When I give you all the love I possess, it is worthless and feeble in

comparison with all you give to me. I want to be happy : I don't want responsibilities."

"I can make you happy. You shan't have responsibilities."

"But you are one yourself. Suppose I disappoint you, suppose I fail you just when you expect the most from me. I couldn't stand your reproaches—I couldn't face your disillusion."

"Women who have these fears never disappoint."

She knew better, and felt the superiority of her own worldly experience.

"No ! no ! I have dreadful misgivings. Do take me at my own estimate. Our friendship—our love is perfect. I cannot bear the risk of spoiling it—by anything wilfully inevitable ! "

His trained ear caught the ingenuity of that " wilfully inevitable." Passion is mightier, however, than the strongest sense of humour. There was not a laugh in him where Rosabel was concerned. Does the

parched creature make a jest of wine? or pause, thirsting, to give the scientific explanation of foam, sparkle, and the culture of the grape?

"All this," said he, "only proves how . . ." The thought was never finished.

"Ah, when I am with you, you make me feel more confident. I can almost believe in myself. I can imagine myself doing heroic things. But when you have gone, I feel afraid. I merely wish to be happy in a light, easy way—without any trouble."

"That's impossible. True happiness has something terrific—all but agonising—always. It's a birthright. Don't hang back from it. Get rid of the fear of suffering. It is a state of death—not life!"

"You are so extreme. Other people are more reasonable."

"Reasonable people live half in the grave. That's well-known, although your relatives would not give me the *bienvenu*

for saying so. Ah, Rosabel, be more firm. The will is the one thing in men and women which resembles what theologians call the soul. Show me a woman with a will, and the courage of it."

"But my religion!"

She spoke with sincerity. God and religion were almost as important to her as Carrie Ceppel and the social code which they all mistook for a conscience. The social code had this advantage over the Christian ideal of conduct: it was well adapted to the average creature. The Christian ideal—extremely beautiful, and rating perfection of spirit above all things—went altogether beyond human strength, and came, many liked to fear, from one who did not know hearts, or what they could ordinarily endure. To some were given a clear but despairing intuition of luminous spheres beyond this earth. Rosabel envied them the gift, and made the most of the earth she knew. Yet,

she went regularly to church, had a genuine desire to have her prayers fulfilled, and made them on the chance of their being influential. This then was why she pointed out religion among the several stumbling-blocks in the way of her complete repudiation of vulgar prejudices.

Luttrel received her protest as fire consumes straw.

"Darling, don't condescend to the usual hypocrisies at such a moment. You are quite exempt from superstition. Your mind is as free as my own."

"Yes, free. Besides, God would understand," she added.

"Then no one else matters," he said. "You must see that no one else could matter."

"The irregular sort of arrangement never answers," she faltered, coming to the crowning fact.

"I could undertake to make it answer—if you loved me, and trusted me."

"But if one loved you and trusted you, one would want to marry you in a proper way," said Rosabel ingenuously. "The most advanced women always want to be properly married when they are really in love."

"I don't ask you to be advanced—I ask you to be loyal, and fearless of bogies. You are not, in your heart, afraid of bogies. I have never yet interfered with honest religious cowardice. You have none : it is a Sunday etiquette with you—nothing else."

She winced—finding the congratulation too true in its terms. All women have a peculiar wish to be thought potential, if not actual, saints : saints, be it clear, of the orthodox type with sound records in the way of long fasts, and gifts for the working of miracles. She was displeased to find herself lodged in a distant catalogue from that heavenly company. And yet the man's clumsiness was, on its bare merit, a mark of grace. A tactful lover is not born,

but made by long training in the arts of courtship. The merest recruit among dragoons could have beaten Luttrell in the conduct of a wooing. What young novice of no more than seven great passions would have told a yielding woman to her face that she was no saint?

"Affection justifies much, no doubt," said Rosabel; "my mind is free there—if you mean that."

"I mean more," he said, hotly: "we seem to be jiggling with our destiny. You can't help the habits of your education, but there's an invertebrate pseudo-philosophic jargon come into fashion which is the most immoral thing I know. The old naïve sentimentality was silly, and overdone, but it was at least graceful, and it was always most decisive. This other is utterly hollow. It makes the whole of life seem unreal. And yet it makes for the same result as plainer talk. *Tout finit toujours de même . . . par la fin.* Do let us have

done, once and for all, with lies and lying."

"Of course, you are right," she murmured, not asking herself what she meant or knowing what she said.

"I can even argue against myself," he went on: "I would sooner lose you forever than hear you say, 'I ought not to take this step: it is against my conscience, but I take it to please you.' There is nothing but ruin that way. Nothing but remorse and hatred and terrible recriminations. But I maintain that, in your heart, your opinion is mine. The one hesitation is based on a fear of outside opinion. If you are convinced, you will have the courage of that conviction. If you are not convinced, then you are bound to be timorous and faltering. You won't be able to respect yourself, and, secretly, you will respect those who condemn you."

"I am convinced. I am, really."

"I think so. But you must prove it.

I cannot prove it for you. You cannot be loyal to your highest beliefs and please the mob—or any little parcel of it—at the same time. Of course, there is something, in fact, a great deal, to be said for the conventional point of view. But if you cannot with perfect sincerity accept it, don't attempt odious compromises, and outward forms of subserviency to laws which you find unjust. It is no disgrace to be mistaken: it is a crime to be a hypocrite. That is the sin against light—the worst of all.”

“You talk in such a frightening way.”

“I want to frighten you. I want no sense of deception, no taking in, no euphemism. I am in earnest, and you must be in earnest too. I distrust so much criticism.”

“But the ideas of a lifetime! You expect me to throw them over at once.”

“No; I expect you to admit that you never had any reasoned ideas. You inherited maxims of convenience, without weighing one, or examining one. You

joined issue blindly with the existing social scheme. I ask you to use your soul. You have one."

"You must help me to be firm."

"Is that your answer to my letter?"

"I suppose so. If you were quite like other men," she exclaimed presently, "I ought to resent every word you have been saying. But, of course, you are consistent. After all, it is your view. I never intended however to accept it fully—that is, in action. Marriage is really—as much as anything else—a social necessity. I should have to love you quite beyond all reason before I could throw the gauntlet down . . ."

"Then love me quite beyond all reason!"

"I do . . . you must think so . . . you must know it."

"If I knew it, I shouldn't be talking . . . we should be on our way to Norway at this moment. I do not know it—that is my difficulty."

" But if I say so ? "

" Saying so ! Do you realise what the word love means ? It cannot be said at all. It is either a call or a curse—inexorable, unanswerable either way."

" Oh yes ! I can believe that."

" No : you may come to believe it in time."

He spoke with bitterness. She seemed flippant ; she was, in heart and conscience, lighter than those early blossoms which bloom in sudden sunshine and perish, as quickly, at the first cold breeze. Why was he driven to love her ? What were the uses of philosophy, of self-knowledge, of discipline, if, at the touch of a certain hand, the glance of a pair of eyes, the mere sound of a soft footstep, all the wisdom painfully acquired and the experience gained by resisting—went for nothing.

" But here comes Carrie ! " said Rosabel.

" Then I shall write again."

He looked at her well, realising vaguely,

most unwillingly, the dependent spirit which animated that beautiful face and form.

When he had gone, Mrs. Ceppel spoke with severity to her sister.

"I don't think I can wink at this. He acts with a certain air of authority. People will blame me. And, after all, you ought not to trifle with him."

"He understands me perfectly."

"If he understood you perfectly, he would admire your big eyes and your beautiful frocks—he wouldn't let you play the devil with him—as you are doing. He is a good sort but most fanatical, as Archie says. Come to Palermo sensibly with us, and let him forget you—before it is too late."

"I don't wish him to forget me."

"Rosabel! what do you mean?"

"I say, I am not sure that I wish him to forget me."

"Madness!" exclaimed Carrie, "pure

stark stare raving madness ! And I know who will have to suffer the most ! I am the best friend that poor man has—could he but know it, the fool ! ”

“ There is always a certain jealousy in families and in one’s friends on the subject of love,” was Rosabel’s retort.

“ Love ? ” echoed Mrs. Ceppel : “ love ? ”

She hurled the word at her sister’s retreating figure, and stood, alone in her vast, famous drawing-room reiterating the famous syllable as though it were something dead from a lost, barbaric language.

“ Love ! What next ? ”

CHAPTER III

“ Yet love, alas, and life in me,
Are not two several things, but purely one.”

“ Thy hobby-horse is an idol, a very idol, a fierce and rank idol . . . to fall down to, and worship.”

“ Thou robb’st my days of bus’ness and delights,
Of sleep thou robb’st my nights :
Ah, lovely thief, what wilt thou do ?
What ? Rob me of Heaven too ?
Thou even my prayers dost steal from me :
And I, with wild idolatry
Begin, to God, and end them all to thee.”

THE party for *Coriolanus* took place on the morrow. Mrs. Ceppel made Susie rest during the whole afternoon, and had her own hair especially arranged by a new man, much praised by the Royalties, from Paris. When it was done, however, she thought that Rosabel’s head looked better. But it was too late then to make a change.

Her temper was tried by this vexatious discovery, and she became too ill to risk any fatigue.

"Odo would be so cross if I tired myself for nothing," she said, with the exemplary resignation of a Christian spouse. "It would be wrong of me to go."

Susie concealed her delight at this decision by pinching the upholstery at the back of all the chairs in the young matron's darkened boudoir. Rosabel and she were sent off in the old station coupé, drawn by the light-luggage horse and driven by the under-coachman. Careful Carrie—even from the sofa of sickness—had countermanded her morning order for the new brougham and the greys. These splendours were for herself alone. Further, it would have been absurd to give Beauleigh a wrong idea of the style poor little Susie's prospects allowed her to expect. "I made *my* marriage on a dress-allowance of thirty pounds, and no background! Let Susie

do the same. She will be all the happier in the long-run—sought for herself alone ! ”

This reassuring sentimentality rounded off the raw edges of a Spartan wisdom which would have been exhibited quite as firmly in any case.

Augustus Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Beauleigh, Lord Wroxall, Sir Courtenay Ragot, and Luttrell were waiting in the vestibule of the Carlton Hotel. The Duke was a gloomy, good-looking youth with a perpetual frown of distrust, and a very tolerable figure. Most men thought him a prig, and many eager mothers complained that he gave himself ridiculous airs. To Rosabel and her little sister, however, he was uncommonly gracious—a perfect duck, in fact, as Susie said. How tenderly the band played as the party marched into the restaurant ! how the first violin—in a killing uniform—swayed recklessly in his moan of the *Simple Aveu* (by request) ! how the people nudged each other to point

out Lady Shortclough ! how they badgered the head-waiter for the names of the ugly wizened man with a face like shrivelled parchment, and the clever, foreign-looking man, and the horsey man, and the sweetly pretty young girl with the lovely white neck and arms ? And as for Beauleigh. Fellows, who said they could not stand him, fasted half through their dinners in their efforts to catch the ducal eye. The clatter of plates, service and conversation : the odour of many hundreds of dishes : the lights, the band, the buzz, the curiosity, and the excitement in the air were delicious joys to Susie. Then the theatre : only Shakespeare of course, she was not yet allowed to see up-to-date, really interesting plays. She had read some of the society papers, and they all said how very dull *Coriolanus* was—"unvital to a degree and unconvincing," was the striking phrase of one accomplished critic. Never mind : she could whisper to Beauleigh at the back

of the box all through the performance. Ragot and Wroxall, between each act and during several scenes, spent as much time as possible at the bar, drinking whisky and soda to ward off boredom, and discussing a very dear old friend who was about to be divorced. The question was: Had she brought it on herself? They were inclined to think so. They could forgive her the affair with Travers, the Dumville, the Renton, and the Blathercombe episodes, but not the asinine bolt with Rigby Lawrence. Who was he, to begin with? Gentlemen who have to wonder about the antecedents of a Rigby Lawrence cannot be expected to feel much interest in a semi-mythical Roman's quite transparent unfitness for public life. And nobody talked that way. "It is so infernally long-winded," said Ragot, with decision: "what is it all about?"

Luttrel and Rosabel, to all appearance, were engrossed in the tragedy and had little

to say to each other beyond a few comments on the piece.

"Was Coriolanus right or wrong in his attitude?" asked Rosabel.

"Right in his appreciation of the mob. wrong in his revenge against its ignorance: wrong again in listening to his mother—the eternal type of conventionally virtuous, abjectly worldly women," said Luttrell: "she obeyed the mob, not because she thought it wise, but because it was the loudest engine of applause. Now Shakespeare has drawn the crowd without bitterness. Its heart is sound: it is its brain that needs a little attention. And observe, they were not so wrong about Coriolanus. He hated them: he had no mercy on them, and, out of personal disappointment, he betrayed his country. He wouldn't show his physical wounds when he wanted a vote, but he made a parade of his injured pride when he had to gratify a malice. Shakespeare never draws one-sided figures, or tells a

story with its back to the light. We have the whole situation, and all the souls."

Such dry talk could not be dangerous, thought Sir Courtenay.

The evening ended with a supper at Prince's. Susie and Beauleigh twittered away like robins in the spring—quite out-voiced by the stronger-throated birds. But this was all the pleasanter for them, and their precious confidences about hockey, golf, Bridge, ping-pong, acquaintances in common, and the peculiarities of senior relatives were things to dream of. The little creature had made a palpable conquest. She was the prettiest small being ever seen—a fairy made for adoration. Beauleigh, a good, steady boy of excellent and reserved character, was driven half off his head by her lovely complexion, her magical eyes, and her innocence. Ragot and Wroxall—experts in the signs of a regulation passion in a well-bred breast—were entirely satisfied.

"It's a go," said Sir Courtenay to Caroline on his return to Chesterfield Gardens.

"But Rosabel and Luttrell?" she asked.

"Nothing, my dear: it is mere talk-talk between them. She'll get very sick of him: take my word. A little jaw-practice, that's all. Of course, he's hard hit. Rosie's a devilish fine woman."

Mrs. Ceppel's suspicions were not allayed.

"I think we are in for it," she maintained quietly. "Of course, nothing, with her, ever lasts very long. As for him, he is murderously infatuated. You can see that in his eyes."

A certain crime, committed, it was pretended, for love, in a very low class of society, was at the time attracting notice in the Press. Carrie and Wardle had discussed it—rejoicing that the discreeter affections of the well-to-do and the aristocratic led to nothing more unpleasant—at the worst—than the horrid Divorce Court.

"And even that is managed much better

now," had been the Wardle comment :
" they don't make half such a fuss."

It gave Mrs. Ceppel a certain satisfaction to associate Luttrell—in her thoughts—with the most unfortunate type of ill-born criminal.

" He must have something in common with criminals and lunatics," she liked to say, and said again now : " or he could not take such a morbid interest in the dreadful creatures."

She fixed her glance on Courtenay :—

" I quite shudder when I see him with her. He has been abroad so much that he has become like a foreigner in all his feelings."

" Buncombe, my dear, pure Buncombe ! Take my word ! And Bennet did not murder his wife in order to marry that other woman. He killed his wife because she knew too much about him, and had threatened to betray him. That murder was for self-preservation. Take my word !"

And with that he trotted home to his chambers in St. James's Place.

Luttrel, on saying good-night, had pressed a letter into Rosabel's hand. His letters flattered, puzzled, and subdued her : they were the most curious mixture of undisciplined passion (expressed in perfect taste with lyric euphemism), metaphysical dissertations, political and literary allusions. The love passages she read again and again : the rest, after one enthusiastic but fearful skimming, was never glanced at a second time. Pages treated in this way were, to her vision, rather like dark clouds streaked with lightning, and, in the nature of things, the lightning made the great impression.

"This man knows how to love," she thought : "this man spoils one for the others."

She had no definite resolution then to defy the little world, and live with him openly in the way once thought appro-

prate enough for artistic geniuses. But she knew that he, at any rate, meant nothing less than an audacious revolt against society : theirs was to be the fearless and noble union of predestined souls, a calling of all the spheres, bodies celestial and terrestrial, to witness that this man took this woman to be eternally his own. Her first civil contract with the unspeakable Shortclough was an abominable fraud (dishonouring to common humanity), grossly perpetrated on a girl in her teens. Let the devil take the odium of that blunder : Luttrell would protect its victim.

“ Such iniquity—sinning against every moral and physical law—must be illuminated, execrated, and put down,” said Luttrell, much in earnest on matters of justice, and also fairly reeling with love for the martyr to a monstrous etiquette.

With matters of principle, sublimely viewed as such apart from any question of the heart, Rosabel was not more concerned

than the majority of her sex. Justice was associated in her mind with Magistrates and Judges. It was an official term. It seemed to have no particular connection with life as she knew it. Doubtless, her position was hard, but she had been trained in earliest childhood to see, by her father's bankruptcy, the advantages of a pitiable state. Among beggars, the one with the leanest body and the fewest rags is the most rich. This law, with many variations, runs through the whole social organism, and Lady Shortclough's advisers had encouraged her from the first, by offering many proofs of the world's tender forbearance toward those who could suffer severe handicaps prudently, and work a stripe into a talent. Prudence, caution, common sense—these were the ample, exhaustive terms set up as sign-posts along her path—not, of necessity, lonesome after sunset. Considered thus, the unhappy situation was not so bad. Philosophers have said that man is simply

the most crafty of the animals. If his instincts alone could satisfy him, he would need no training. But he sinks under the malady of thought. Luttrell, therefore, from excessive thinking, took, in Rosabel's opinion, a one-sided, perhaps over-sensitive view of the case. And yet she felt the charm, the power of his uncompromising rectitude.

"He has immoral ideas," she owned, without any shock, in the silence of her own thoughts: "Mama would call him a materialistic atheist. Of course, he is only something like an Encyclopædist—the sort of person Mr. John Morley used to write about."

Rosabel, determined to keep pace with her lover's intellect, had subscribed to the London Library, where she called, almost daily, in Carrie's coupé, for a large number of volumes. Some she read, and she soon acquired the impressive art of quoting all. This delighted, while it did not wholly

deceive, Luttrell. She had an *esprit bien né*, and her comment was original even where her text was insecure. It was good finding when she hit on the word Encyclopædist. Very few of her friends—except the political ones—knew in the least what it meant, but they were always reassured when she declared Luttrell to be a person answering to that singular description. Just as the adjective doctrinal applied to sermons, or academic applied to art, gives the credential of extreme correctness, so the blessed substantive — *Encyclopædist*—endowed Luttrell with that respectability which is allowed, in some cases, to assassins who kill either the body or the soul neatly, setting forth their logical motives in scholastic order. The letter given to Rosabel after the play contained the maddest propositions—propositions which, because of their madness, attracted the reckless woman. They seemed so impossible, so unreal that she could imagine herself agreeing to them without

any fear for the consequences. It was as though he had said, "Let us pretend to be swallows and fly: let us pretend to be eagles and soar: let us make-believe that we are stars and shoot sublimely through the empyrean." Where was the harm of replying: "Yes." In fact, they had indulged a good deal in these charming fancies. They were always picturing themselves in some enchanted solitude, or brilliant crowd, or on the mountains, or on the sea, or in orchards, or in wild forests. Sometimes she would be a nymph, at other times a Babylonian (for fun), but most often she was herself. When, therefore, he pointed out, in handwriting of extreme beauty and illegibility, that he owned an everlasting love, a reasoned belief which could justify any step, and three hundred thousand pounds: that, in consequence of the last-named, he was able to offer her at least a release from any dependence on Lord Shortclough or her family (it was perhaps plain

speaking for an imaginary case), she felt that Make-believe, too, had its substantial side. Rosabel was anxious for freedom. She was not well treated by her people-in-law: she was hounded, tormented, and insulted by her own relatives. But no freedom is possible with an empty pocket. Luttrell, a sensible man when he was not harassed by emotion, had said frequently that idealists were mostly poor and this was why they could not demonstrate their usefulness. You can neither march with prejudices nor against them on the unaided, starving strength of a personal conviction. Money must have its great part in the fight—whether as a forfeit or a reward or as a vulgar guarantee. Rosabel detected, in her case, the guarantee, and mused seriously on the alluring thought that there is much in being able to afford an experiment. People could not accuse her of ruining Luttrell, or dragging the over-taxed Ragots into deeper poverty, or using, with ignominious im-

modesty, the Shortclough settlements on someone nearer than a neighbour but less entitled to her protection. She could be rid of them all, dance her dance, and the Piper—the heroic, handsome, rich Piper-Encyclopædist—would ask nothing. There would be no hat-in-hand appeal to My lords, ladies and gentlemen watching the inspired performance. *The Piper and his Rosabel*, clad in purple and fine linen, counting out the coin of the realm, and faring sumptuously, would face their own generation, and, buried together in one magnificent monument, defy the ages. Streaks of divine lightning in the clouds of financial policy made these facts brilliantly apparent to Rosabel. Luttrell, of course, was poor in comparison with Odo Ceppel, and he had not the wealth of Lord Wroxall—who was notoriously frantic to have the Beauty on any terms—without the reasoned philosophy clause. But Luttrell had sufficient means, and a very nice old-fashioned house

overlooking St. James's Park. He did not suggest an undignified flight to the Continent, or the New World. No: he would drive her in his own carriage to the paternal domicile—where he had been born—in Queen Anne's Gate—and present her to his sister and the old retainers as—"My wife!" She would then write certain letters, signing herself—*Rosabel Luttrell*. There was to be no *apologia pro vita sua*. People could take the all-embracing signature, or leave it. "To those who are worth knowing, and to those who care about us, the announcement will be sufficient," said Luttrell. She could not reply, in the teeth of such high and mighty pride, that few women are satisfied by the small circle of those who love them and of those who are worth knowing. That would mean, thought Rosabel, social isolation, practically. She dared not say so. And she, too, was infatuated: she was not afraid of sacrifices on her own score. No one at three-and-twenty

is wholly given to the worship of this world. Youth, in its very essence, is inclined to revolve, is inclined to despise domestic laws of expediency. The fear was, in all faith, for Luttrell and his career. She had none of that destructive ambition found in vulgar minds: the wrecking a man's character and prospects seemed to her a very squalid achievement. Too easy, moreover, to be even incidentally exciting. Luttrell, however, was known to be no less iconoclastic than John Stuart Mill in his social theories: from the beginning, as a bachelor in love with no one, he had attacked the marriage and divorce laws. By lectures, by writings, by active and open association with the most determined Socialists in Europe, he had proclaimed himself a Reformer. From him, therefore, much was expected in the way of irregularities: your monied Agitator, well-born and well-educated, is a rare social phenomenon, and the least concession to popular feeling on the

subject of conventional unions would have seemed an act of weak treachery on his part. He had said, in reply to an importunate moralist, that the unhappiness of humanity arose, not so much from its moral and physical laws, as from the false ideas taught and expressed about them. "You need truth, remorseless truth, as regards your own sensations," said he, quoting Turgenev's advice to young writers. In his youth he had studied St. Simon, Bazard, Fourier, Robert Owen, Louis Blanc, and Rodbertus: later he had fallen under the influence of Karl Marx, Bebel, and Schäffle. The men who take Karl Marx in earnest may, in the course of time, come to the real democracy of the Roman Church, but they do not give tolerance to those doctrines of social compromise laid down by the Archibald Wardles. Rosabel, shivering between apprehension and acquiescence, realised Luttrell's sincerity. She only wanted the face to be as bold as he. Madame Roland

was an example of advanced thought combined with beauty, but that heroine has been called, not wholly with injustice, "a bad lot." Lady Shortclough recoiled from the possibility of such an epithet being applied to herself.

She put out the lights in her room, and peered out into the street below. Luttrell was there, stationed on the opposite side of the road, watching her window. She admired his fine stature, his audacity, his devotion. He had asked for a sign of encouragement. There was a small handkerchief tucked in the bosom of her gown. She tied a pearl ring in this and threw it at his feet. A hope went with the token that he would regard her act as strictly non-committal. But all that night his words rang through her dreams. She despised her set. Life, with Luttrell, had an intention and some meaning: without him, it looked forlorn, contemptible enough, and base. He asked her to leave a Restaurant

for the Garden of Eden. Could one be human, could one be beautiful, three-and-twenty, persecuted, misunderstood, unhappy, and find any ground for disregarding that call? An everlasting love from a man who knew his mind was, as the Restaurant world went, no cheap gift. One could be pardoned for graciously weighing it. Had she thrown enough in throwing a mere pearl? Was this staking her counter with bold skill? It was venturing warily—that was pretty certain.

CHAPTER IV

"Why art thou in a brown study?"

"To see the nature of women: that be they never so near God, yet they love to die in a man's arms."

"And where's my ginger-bread, I pray you?"

"—Durate: atque expectate cicadas."

A WOMAN happily in love is at her best. Every outward charm has an added glory, and every potentiality of her soul, heart, conscience, and intellect is aroused. The plainest so influenced will appear almost beautiful, the dullest gain a kind of wit, the coldest can be kind. They are transfigured, glorified, inspired beings. But Nature, ironically bountiful to the suffering sex, metes out her rough justice—half in jest—to the splendid one. Men in love labour at once under every disadvantage.

Their judgment is dethroned : their strength mocks them : their associates complain of their wandering tempers : they get haggard and feel hunted : they pursue their Fairs and are pursued themselves by all the devils. A hungry madness absorbs their energy : they are capable of any crazy deed. The fit does not last, but while it lasts the dangers are mortal. This is why men are notoriously silent in company on the subject of real love. They fear it, resent it, will join any conspiracy to keep it away from their friends, sons, or associates, and the whole system of modern education makes for the cultivation of vices instead of passions ; if possible, the substitution of an exotic brutality, calculating, forced, and over-stimulated, for the natural feelings of mankind. Some, fearing this last, advocate a maudlin style of sentimental morals—together repellent to a healthy mind and scarcely convincing to the melancholic. Others, vigorous enough but too impatient

of the heart, found their teaching upon science, and bid romantic youth to go study the mating of the nobler beasts and birds. A brief, sane, obvious courtship: some gentle roaring or a brightness in the plumage: then, the struggle for existence, and the continuation of the species. No shattered nerves, no sleepless nights, no vindictive scenes with blustering relatives, no wasted lives, blighted hopes, little tombs, or lying epitaphs telling of bright days unaccountably cut short. People die of long, cruel, weary, sorrowful, or empty days, never of a bright one, and never unaccountably. Nothing is more reasonable than death. Luttrell's friends, who belonged to the vigorous school of thought, were indignant at the change in his character. His heart, they complained, was no longer in his work. They missed the old fervour in his words. Indifference and lukewarmness triumphed over all his efforts to assume an enthusiasm which he

no longer felt for the Movement. He heard questions with fatigue and answered them from memory. As his interest appeared to wane, he tried to atone for lack of warmth by an assiduous painful attention to matters of detail, punctuality, and unimportance. His colleagues were not inhuman; they had, indeed, been waiting for him to make some desirable union for the example of the rank and file and the strengthening of the Cause. They had been hoping to see the signs of rational, well-ordered affection in him for some one of the devoted, remarkable women of his own party. They had even elected a favourite for the Citizeness Luttrellship—a lioness of pure blood, an eagle of the loftiest mountains. She was a certain Mrs. Tarring-Seafeld, who possessed brains, a fortune, and beauty enough to satisfy any Committee of cultured men, or even men without culture. What then was the consternation to see Jocelyn—who was really

loved—dazzled by the most frivolous ornament of a peculiarly meretricious set? Miss Luttrell, a religious creature, thoroughly opposed to the socialistic movement on the Continent as “the free-masonry of infidels and free-lovers,” detested Mrs. Torring-Seafeld (chiefly because she could not prove a single thing against her virtue), and took to her bed every time the thought occurred to her that Jocelyn might possibly be driven to marry the Favourite of the party. Mrs. Torring-Seafeld was literary, a pamphleteer, an ex-medical student: she had been a paintress (working under Carolus Duran), a sculptress (working under Rodin himself), a pianist (under Saint-Saëns): she had married a violinist who perished, fighting by Luttrell’s side, in the Greek War. She attracted all men and children, animals and birds. A great many stories were told about her by women whom men did not like, and whom other women generally refused to know. None of these

stories were true, and Amélie Tarring-Seafeld could stare slander out of countenance with a light spirit. Amélie was a pronounced brunette of the Latin type—with a defined line on her admirable upper-lip. Miss Luttrell declared her Spanish-looking, Italian-looking, Oriental-looking, and God knows what. She even said "that Byron might have written stuff about her," which in the spinster's judgment, was a truly damaging, unanswerable supposition. Her one objection to Rosabel, on the other hand, was the fact that she was not free. "Lord Shortclough is alive," she would complain, "and she cannot divorce the unfortunate man just because of his insanity. It is a very sad case, but 'whom God hath joined'"—

"Yes, God," said Jocelyn, once.

"Well, didn't God join them?" replied Miss Luttrell, deeply pained by his tone.

"No; her family. Make a young girl's life infernal, and then quote God when she

marries merely as a move from one hell to another ! The boiling lake exchanged for the frozen sea ! ”

“ What ideas ! ” exclaimed his sister.
“ All young girls are perfectly happy. ”

On the morning after the party for *Coriolanus*, Hildegarde called on her brother and found him in close conversation with a Labour Delegate and Amélie Seafeld. They were discussing the strike at Marseilles. The Labour Delegate was assuring Luttrell that his presence would be required there.

“ You ought to go. It is your duty, ” said Amélie.

“ Then I shall go, ” said Jocelyn, with a sigh which was partly a yawn.

Amélie was about thirty years of age. She wore uncommon clothes and beautiful turquoises : she smoked cigarettes incessantly. In figure and appearance she was very like Botticelli's favourite model. She had the same quick irresistible smile ; the

same more or less constant melancholy. With Luttrell, her manner was at once charming, sexless, and authoritative. It would have been impossible to accuse her of coquettishness, of over-familiarity, of the least affectation, or of the unpleasant assertiveness of the emancipated, egoistic woman. She was not "Pallas, bound up in a volume," nor did she suggest, in any degree, the official Egeria. But she sat in Luttrell's library, self-possessed, thoughtful, with a clear, fresh complexion and calm pensive eyes. Some violets pinned in the lace of her dress gave a pleasant country fragrance to the whole room.

When the Labour Delegate—a sharp, lean man with a scrubby beard and big spectacles—had gone, Mrs. Tarring-Seafeld stood up.

"If you want to talk to Mr. Luttrell," she said to Hildegarde, "I can correct these proofs another time." She held a dozen printed slips.

"You can do them in the little study," said Jocelyn : "we must get them off this afternoon."

Amélie nodded, lit a fresh cigarette, and, taking a reference book or two from one of the shelves, went out.

"She *is* so odd," said Miss Luttrell. "I suppose she thinks I don't like her."

"She wouldn't resent it in any case. She has neither vindictiveness nor vanity !"

"What nonsense ! Every nice woman wishes to make a favourable impression on her own sex. But I didn't call, my dear Jocelyn, to quarrel about Amélie Seafeld. I am sure that she is a fine character when one gets to know her. However, she is no business of mine."

"Well, frankly, she is not," said her brother. "We don't want to get mixed up in an utterly wearisome controversy, do we ?"

"No, dear, no, God forbid. Certainly

not. I quite see that it is difficult to advise"—

"I don't need advice, Garde."

"No man will ever own that he needs it. Do children cry for medicine? Not they! I have something to say, and I am determined to say it. You will spoil your life if you keep up with Lady Shortclough. She's pretty and you are a man: but it is the road to ruin. Men don't mind scandals, I know, and I have the sense to see that, in such a case, a lot of excuses would be made. As society is at present, you could both live down the scandal. She doesn't love you enough — that's my point."

"Oh!"

"She won't stick to you. She is flattered for the moment, but, by and by, she will have a hankering after the empty-heads of her own crew."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it. What does she care

about Socialism? What does she care about these Labour questions? What does she really care about the treatment of criminals or Prison Reform? Nothing on earth. You are both in love, and prisons, or dust-bins, or factory hands, or microbes would do as an excuse for conversation. But there'll soon be no necessity for an excuse. We have a lot of that kind of thing in the Parish. Poor Mr. Hampden-Howard could a tale unfold about the Parish Workers! I won't wander. I will keep to the point. But I may hint at my knowledge of life."

Luttrel's philosophical mind began to play round the many reflections called up by his sister's speech. He thought of Bishop Berkeley, who denied that we do see things outside us; and a good deal about Schopenhauer's *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* he quoted softly under his breath—

"I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me
High mountains are a feeling."

But he had received a wound, nevertheless, under each strong wing : to continue the metaphor, there was a soreness, as it were, of the muscle. The flight was majestic : the effort, considerable.

"She won't stick to you!" These were the poisoned words, arrowy, cold, penetrating words.

"I know that you mean well," was the kindest reply he could think of : "you must see that I cannot discuss the matter."

"I see that you are set upon having your own way. But, oh ! that you, of all men, should come to this. You, who were never sentimental !"

"I am less sentimental than ever now."

"I knew it. This is much more dangerous than sentimentality. She's only pretty, Lyn : only pretty. I own that she has the most beautiful blue eyes I ever saw in a human countenance. But there are young women in Jay's and other big shops every bit as good-looking as Lady Short-

clough. Take away the glamour and the frame, you find a very ordinary example of the usual pretty person. Many people would even admire Amélie Seafeld far more."

"No, they wouldn't."

He wondered whether they would, all the same, and thought it, in justice to Hildegarde, remotely possible. So he added—

"Or, at least, *I* would not. But these comparisons are in atrocious taste."

"Most true things are in bad taste," she replied grimly. "I am going now. I have uttered my warning. Good-bye!"

She stooped and kissed his forehead, but Luttrell, consumed by his passion for Rosabel, was resentful under every other touch. Unconsciously, he shook his sister off, muttering something about hoping to see her again before long. He had this business at Marseilles. "You heard what that fellow said? Well, I take it that he

is right. I must go. Oh, I am keen enough about it. One doesn't want to be officious. That was my sole hesitation."

After Miss Luttrell's retreat, he went down to the little study where Amélie was hard at work over the proof-sheets.

"Garde has been going on again," he said: "she will drive me to some harsh letter."

"Never write if you can help it," said Amélie, substituting, with great neatness, a semicolon for a comma.

"Of course, her motive is transparent enough, and, from her own outlook, justifiable. But no man would ever take the liberty of such interference with the private affairs of another man. Women have little delicacy in this respect. I cannot discuss Lady Shortclough with anyone."

"Why should you?" said Amélie. "I know one thing. You haven't submitted to romanticism, as you call it, without a certain resentment. It goes against your grain."

He became thoughtful, and his eyes showed the sudden ferocity, sombre, fatal, unsparing of the male animal.

"Sentimentality," said he, "has all but destroyed the best minds and the best bodies of the race. Modern life is a limp battle between the rhetoricians, the mob, and the money-changers. My hope is to see a washerwoman and a schoolmaster bolt, with a great passion, to the North Pole. This would do more for humanity than any Nihilism, any Socialism, any literature or art conceivable. And now those proofs."

They were those of an essay for the *Nineteenth Century* on "Imagination as a Factor in Crime: The Discipline of the Imaginative Faculty." Mrs. Tarring-Seafeld herself was its author, but she always submitted her writings to Luttrell's criticism. For an hour, he was at his keenest—making the effort because of his friendship for Amélie. At the end of that time, his

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attention flagged : she spoke of Marseilles : she reminded him that Beylestein, a famous German socialist then in London, was coming to lunch. All to no purpose. He was altogether preoccupied with thoughts and emotions relating to Rosabel. An inexperienced person might have thought he was under the influence of an opiate, but Amélie watched the sufferer as a mother does a sick child. She knew the symptoms, the probable duration of the attack, its inevitable consequences. In this particular case, she decided that the crisis would be the making of him—a supreme test, as it were, of his mental constitution. A proud, independent, scornful man in the throes of love-sickness, however, is anything but the best of company. Amélie brought him, with tenderness in her voice, to the sensitive subject—

“Lady Shortclough, I see, has joined the Prison Reform Committee.”

“Against my knowledge. It is far better

that she should not take an active part in these matters."

"Far better."

"A forced interest has no staying-power. It must be engrained: it must be in the moral fibre. Of course, she is full of intellect and feeling, but I shall keep her out of the party machinery! Painters' wives don't paint: a politician's wife, a soldier's wife, is wisest and most loved when she appears to know nothing of politics or war."

"You are quite right."

"I am not talking at random either, Amélie," he said abruptly.

"Then it has come to a question of the wisest and most loved wife?" She looked up with a kind glance.

"Yes. I can tell no one else yet. But you are different. You know what it all means."

"That's true. And how good you were to me through all my troubles. You, I hope, will be more fortunate than I was."

"Can't you forget that man?"

"No," she answered.

"Do you think about him the whole time?"

As a rule, he had never been interested in questions of the sort, finding them a little mawkish, but his own case now made him curious about others. He studied Amélie's tragic face, and repeated—

"Do you think about Lamanov the whole time?"

"No; he has become a sub-conscious grief. I daresay that I am superficially happier than most people."

"You have an understanding soul, and you can possess it in patience. You can do justice, too, to the man's point of view. Men themselves rarely have that gift."

"You know my theory," she said: "most of the world's sorrow is caused by the blindness of the unimaginative. They happen to be in the majority, and the rest have to spend their lives wincing. It was my fate

to love a man without the least imagination."

"But he loved you, Amélie."

"That is true, and that is why I learnt to be just—perfectly sane and just—in my estimate of all human relationships. Trouble comes—not from the deficient heart or ill-matched hearts, but from ill-matched visions. *Le reste, est peu de chose*. You can rid yourself of all passion, and its absence will either plunge you into deep ennui and lassitude, or take you on to such heights that the earth will seem a mere marionette show."

"But I don't wish to rid myself of enthusiasm, of passion, as you say," he exclaimed, jumping to his feet, and speaking rapidly. "I don't wish to slay my sense of the joy of life. There is any amount of joy."

"Any amount," she said cordially.

He thought her handsome, strange, and, in a way, inhuman.

"People don't understand you," he blurted out: "you are an enigma. I want you to know Rosabel. I want you to like each other. She saw you at one of my lectures, and asked, 'Who is the Muse with a Roman mouth?'"

Mrs. Seafeld laughed—an action which became her, as she had very white, even teeth.

"So she commended my mouth!"

"It's classic, you know," said Luttrell seriously, as though it were some distant object they were both observing: "but that will show you how appreciative she is: an artist in all her perceptions. A stupid woman would not know how beautiful your face really is. Rodin's bust of you is not for the vulgar."

"No," she replied, maintaining the same impersonal tone. "Rodin sees the suffering and the meaning in most faces."

Beylestein was then announced. The German was broad-shouldered and thick in

the neck : his large eyes moved a great deal in their sockets as he spoke : he was not handsome, but he had a virile, combative air mixed with real good-humour. He looked in the rudest health : intellectuality was, nevertheless, altogether the dominant characteristic of his strongly accentuated features. He was a man who eat, drank and jested with the revellers, but thought and felt in some little solitude on the heights. Amélie had called him "a divine mastiff" : certainly he had the animal attractiveness of some fine dog—one felt impelled to stroke the remarkable head, and look in his splendid, pathetic gaze for some answer to human problems.

Conversation soared at once into the realm of practical politics. There was no rhetoric, no exposition of theories ; no fine sentiments were uttered, and the several letters drafted had nothing in common with the manifestoes of romantic biography.

"Anything from Rustow?" "What

have you said to Claron?" "Galton may come with a fairish amount of supporters, but he is very green." "There must be no shouting before we are out of the wood." "What about Sparwasser?" "He is organising his men in small companies at Lyons and elsewhere." "You will find Jouart an incubus. Better get rid of him." "Is that offer from Davison worth considering?" "It is childish, if he supposes that it can be kept private." "Tell Caving that he must neither lead the van nor bring up the rear. His orders are to remain where he is and watch Hauers." "I don't think much of the proviso." "That game can be kept up briskly." "Do you believe this?" "I do: he quite convinces me."

Phrases passed rapidly, in this way, between them: a listener, not in their plans, could have made nothing of the discussion. Amélie took her instructions in short-hand, worked out a number of telegrams in cypher, and while the two men eat their

lunch, copied documents at a side-table. She rejoined her associates, however, when the coffee was served, and read aloud, as they smoked, several extracts from the French, German and Russian newspapers. Passages here and there were marked with blue or red pencil and cut out, to be pasted in a book for future reference. Presently the question of funds had to be considered. Five or six expected subscriptions had not been paid. Luttrell cheerfully promised to stand in the breach. Money, at least, he could give to order. When enthusiasm grows languid, the upright conscience will snatch at any occasion for the display of numb generosity. Amélie lifted her eyebrows at the sum for which he offered to stand responsible. Beylestein, whose glance had rested now and again on Mrs. Seafeld's mobile face, walked down with her later to the School Board, where she wished to hear an Amendment moved by one of the Progressives.

"Luttrel is all over the shop," said Beylestein, who picked up odd idioms: "*mauvaise affaire, hein?*"

"*De quelle mauvaise affaire parlez-vous?*"

"*Cette femme!* Lady Shortclough. *Elle est jolie? On n'y peut rien: elles sont toutes les mêmes.*" He spoke with a strong German accent, but he went on to explain that gossip was only possible in French. He became very droll and amusing; he told, with a sardonic humour, which was anything but Teuton, a number of stories about men of the people who had loved women of effete aristocratic birth. Luttrel, she pointed out, was not, strictly speaking, a man of the people. He was far better born, in reality, than any of the Ragots. Beylestein moved about restlessly in his ample clothes.

He disliked any reference to birth—except on the broadest lines. You could belong to the people, or the capitalists. He

acknowledged no other distinction, and, while he attached enormous value to mental endowments—mere good breeding, as it showed itself in manners, or delicacy of sentiment, or frailty of beauty, exasperated him. His taste was for loud, vehement talk, boisterous laughter, women of the Rubens type, men who were rough and ready—men who could boast that they were ill at ease in drawing-rooms. He liked Luttrell because he was a scholar, and because he had proved himself a good soldier in Cuba and Greece. He could also drink any amount of rum, or any amount of beer, when rough diplomacy called for such excess.

“Luttrell,” said Beylestein, “is an out-and-outer. His stomach is as strong as his head.”

This was not polished, but Amélie liked the fierce intolerant man, understood him, and appreciated his warm heart. They parted on the steps of the School Board Buildings.

"*Mauvaise affaire*," he repeated, once more, and curled his lips inwards. Then he lifted his soft hat, turned away, and walked along the embankment in the direction of Battersea, thinking that Mrs. Tarring-Seafeld had qualities which made for the creation of a Home-life. He believed that family ties were destructive to the development of any individual existence, yet he cherished, nevertheless, a certain idea of something corresponding to the domestic hearth. Being a philosopher, he sought out a useful symbol for his intellectual conceptions, and they became personified hypotheses in the shape of a room, a good fire, a savoury meal, and an agreeable female companion

". . . moderately fair
And good as guardian angels are
Only beloved and loving me."

There was, as a matter of fact, a young person called Minna, who was not wholly a personified hypothesis. She occurred to

his mind now : his eyes filled with tears, and he wished he was starting then and there for Berlin—where he had left his Minna, making a certain kind of excellent sweet pickle, of which he was immoderately fond. . . .

CHAPTER V

"Sir, you'll allow me my Christian liberty : I may laugh, I hope."

" My sad and dull retirements

My often, nay, often continued fasts.
Sleep banish'd from my eyes, all pleasures strangers,
Have neither root nor growth from any cause
That may arrive at woman."

" Flowers

Though fair, are oft but of one morning : think
All beauty doth not last until the Autumn.
You grow old while I tell you this."

LUTTRELL, once alone in his own house, opened all the windows, and walked from room to room, enjoying the solitude. But he was not long alone. Another friend called, a certain Father Stonyhurst, a Jesuit. He was a man about forty years of age with a grey, thin face and fine straight

black hair. His mouth was rather long, and, from preaching, he used it a good deal in speech—enunciating each word with clearness and decision. The cheek bones were high and the cheeks hollow : one would have described him as bony and nervous, rather than muscular. But he was tall—in spite of a slight stoop : his voice was powerful, melodious, and rather deep. Devout, learned, hard-headed, with perfect manners (of the French school), a genius for listening to others, and an unfluctuating steadiness of mind, he was the least emotional in his language, the most profound in his sympathies of all the priests whom Luttrell had met. He knew a great number, and respected them all, because his work brought him into close contact, often into open conflict, with them. Stonyhurst had a strong regard for Luttrell, and a hope about him : he thought him on the wrong track, but sound in many of his ideas—(particularly with regard to

the treatment of prisoners and criminals), honest, and pure in his own morals.

"From fastidiousness, however, not duty," he would add, shaking his head.

"My dear Stonyhurst," said Luttrell suddenly, while they were talking that day, "is there any chance of your becoming a Mormon prophet?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed the Jesuit, with a shudder.

"Then you will understand how likely I am to accept Roman Catholicism."

"No man's experiences can teach another," answered Stonyhurst quietly: "but I have seldom met a reformer who did not have a personal grievance, or a grudge against one, at least, of the Commandments. He wants, as a rule, something that he has not got."

"That's a universal feeling—it fills your churches too. Religion is mainly for the discontented, and Governments encourage it because, on the whole, it keeps the poor

resigned, and the rich terrified! How many revolutions have been held in check by the parable of Lazarus and Dives? Give parables to the mild, and gin to the strong. There's constitutional legislature in a nutshell."

"You are in good spirits, and a little joke at the expense of humanity doesn't come amiss. The heart, to be serious, always is dissatisfied. I will allow that. But when the average sensual man begins to use his reason, it is usually to justify his bad actions, or his worst desires. One may reason admirably and reach monstrous conclusions. There was very little the matter, I take it, with Nero's logic. Scoundrels and maniacs are never fools."

"I'll be generous, and own that saints are never fools either! There is a great deal to be said for every point of view. But the moral faculty is a faculty of feeling—a susceptibility of pleasure or pain. We are free to act, perhaps: we are not!

always free to desire. The strongest motive wins the day always. The strongest motive with you is to renounce. You give up your will, your nature, all your secondary interest. The main interest is obviously religion. I take everything the gods send in my way. I want to enjoy existence to the full. I have watched these men who quarrel with life:—their years of shattered nerves, the dread of insanity, wretched, sinking energy, sleepless nights, despair.”

“ You would go through as much and more for a political struggle,” said the priest, “ or some love affair ! ”

Luttrel flushed a little. He was labouring under considerable excitement and self-consciousness ; he was in no mood for argument, words and philosophies seemed stale : but he felt a wondering compassion for Stonyhurst, who seemed so wrongly, if heroically, cut off from the wildest emotions of existence.

“ Why keep in a pond when the whole ocean is free to you ? ” he exclaimed : “ although I daresay it is a question of temperament. But say you are ambitious or hungry. You can decide whether you will gratify that wish for power, or that appetite. You cannot command the desire as a craving, or the hunger as a sensation, or destroy either by refusing to indulge them. They are there—they are part of you, yourself.”

“ And why not ? But you have admitted that the decision rests with you whether you will work for the ambition, or appease the hunger. There’s your will. As for ruling motives or ruling passions,—if you sit brooding on your thumb for a sufficient number of hours, you will soon get to find that your thumb governs your existence. You will become, as it were, a thumb and nothing else ! ”

“ Granted,” said Luttrell : “ the same argument applies to the will-power. Med-

itate on that and it will, undoubtedly, control one to a miraculous point. And thus we come again to the strongest motive."

"But it isn't the argument ever—it is the still, small voice. A poor old French curé I knew used to have one answer for all questions— '*Il faut écouter le cœur !*'"

"That is precisely what I am doing."

"Then there is hope for you. I feared you were trusting entirely to Pure Reason? The heart has its own punishments for its own errors, and its own light for its own darkness. A man is judged according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not."

"In Heaven, possibly, but certainly not in this world. Here he is judged according to what other people have in the way of intelligence or knowledge. There is never the slightest trouble or thought taken to realise why anybody does anything, thinks anything, or feels anything.

A man is to be hanged next month for some crime. Has *he* been judged according to what he hath? or what we have done for him, or what we did for his parents? No, we seem to start with the assumption that he had every natural and moral inclination fostered in righteousness. It is quicker to hang him than to think about him!"

"Your heart," said Stonyhurst, rising, "is in the right place! I leave you to your own heart and Almighty God!" And, bidding him good-bye, he went out as serenely as he came in. The hardest thing he had to endure was not the misery of the afflicted, but the cruelty of the prosperous—the meanness, the want of charity, the vindictive, merciless hunting instinct of those who thought themselves "chosen," or better still, wise.

"A good heart," he repeated to himself, as he walked homeward: a kind, genuine heart—a manly fellow. But impatient.

He has no conception of the Infinite or Eternity. It is all for the present day, the fleeting hour."

As he had spent his own life learning how to die, it always seemed a little astonishing to him, in spite of his great experience as a Director of consciences, that men should be so eager to extract every possibility, as quickly as possible, from existence, and cling to it, and pray to have it prolonged, and love it—even in circumstances when it seemed to offer nothing except pain and disappointments. In his secret soul he would have preferred never to have been at all. But the Will of God: that Unquestionable Will. Here he was—whether he would or no—alive, called to a work, and called to give an account of himself at the Final day. He had a giant's frame, and people, as he went along, looked at him timidly. He appeared more than equal to the roughest blows the world could give. So he was—in physical strength and

courage. But the secret, delicate soul within him shrank from every sight, sound, and touch—everything, to that mysterious and intimate sense seemed too brutal, too harsh, too wearisome to be endured. . . . He called it squeamishness and prayed against it, mortifying his exquisite taste at every opportunity.

Luttrel was now expecting Rosabel. She had promised to call that afternoon for a quiet talk. Conversation was all but impossible at Mrs. Ceppel's, and the stealing through Galleries and Museums was not to Lady Shortclough's mind unless she wished to study, earnestly, objects of art or historical interest. There was, in her nature, a real dislike of pretence or slyness: many faults she had—the result of a silly, immoral education, but she wished to be able to account for all her comings, goings, and doings, without embarrassment. She had been to tea at Luttrel's with Hildegarde on a former occasion. To-day she was

coming, for the first time, alone. An hour after the appointed moment, her carriage drove up to the door. Luttrell met her in the hall, and, unable to speak, led the way into his library. She was looking more beautiful than ever: the lovely blue eyes were almost as dark as the violets pinned in her cloak. They were both pale, but she, at least, managed to talk in a trembling tone about the weather.

"There's more sun. What a good view from these windows!"

"Yes—especially in June."

"I wish it were June now."

"Yes? Yet I don't know. I like February."

"February in London, Lyn? Well, perhaps you are right. It is quite bearable."

These inane civilities were mere echoes of politeness from that common, trivial world each had left for another glorious one—their own. A different dialogue al-

together was expressed in their features, and the old language, the old foolishness of ordinary creatures was soon forgotten. These two original beings fell into each other's arms, kissed, laughed, and became gradually articulate, if not more rhetorical.

"Carrie saw you from her window last night," said Rosabel, leaning against him as they stood by the writing-table. "She told me so this morning. But she is far too delighted about Susie and Harry Beauleigh—but don't let us talk about them."

"No."

"By the bye, Carrie asked me who Mrs. Seafeld was. What am I to tell her?"

"Say that she was once engaged to the Russian Minister for Finance. But she wouldn't join the Greek Church, and so they parted."

"And who was she—as a girl?"

"The daughter of an American General. Will that do?"

"Don't tease, darling. You know that such things are nothing to me. It is for Carrie. I like to have a ready answer."

"Of course."

"Is Mrs. Seafeld unhappy about the Russian Minister?"

"He has become a marble memory."

"But if she loved him, why didn't she join the Greek Church?"

"Against her convictions?"

"To please him," she said, watching his face.

This was dangerous ground: Luttrell was too straightforward to shirk the difficulty.

"Amélie is a resolute woman," he replied. "And then her whole life has been—as mine is—a protest against the marriage laws and home tyranny."

"There is much to be said for the con-

ventional, legal thing," she said, sighing. "One is so used to it."

"Naturally. That is why you must be in earnest, and be prepared to make every sacrifice, in attacking it. If you give in to prejudice—merely for your own individual peace and quietness—well, isn't that joining issue with the root of the whole trouble? Agitation should be kept up by the personally contented—not the personally discontented. A great artist is his own most severe critic; but we leave the criticism of our own lives to outsiders. We accept conditions in the cowardly hope that others will put them right. There was no reason why Amélie should not have married. She was a widow, and her Russian Minister was free. But it is the free who ought to fight for liberty—to protest against slavery. She protested. Her conduct has been superbly consistent."

"Then why—?"

"You are going to ask why the man did

not accept her, with gratitude, on her own terms. It might so easily have been the semi-official *liaison*—the worst bondage of all. To Amélie that would have been more odious than marriage. No—she wished the union openly acknowledged, and recognised. In his position, he said this was impossible.”

Rosabel sat down in his chair, and he sat on the table by her side, holding one of her white pretty hands.

“You see,” she said. “One must meet society half-way. I am sure that Mrs. Seafeld is a good woman, but her views are not practical. My position is more sympathetic. I am legally tied to a madman. They force me to consider an extreme step. I have my life, my love, my feelings, what is it all for? Is it for nothing and no one?”

She dropped her eyes, and put her other hand into his.

“What is it all for?” she repeated.

"For me, of course."

She looked up into his face with intense affection—the real simplicity and tenderness of her character shining through tears.

"You have made up your mind," he said, drawing her toward him: "we don't want to talk or think any more. It is a great step, but we are strong enough to take it."

"You are strong enough," she said, "but I am nothing, alone. Do see this, know it, tell yourself how true it is a hundred times each day. Dearest, I am indeed your moon. If you should fail me,—then, blackness, awfulness, no light, no hope, no love in me—not even a shadow."

She put her lips to his face: she cried—not daring to confess how much weaker still she was than any words of her own could ever tell. One seeks refuge in the unknown—rarely in the known, and Luttrell's force of will seemed to her spirit that

mysterious certainty which the devotee finds in his religion; the desolate, in some few visions of the night. Luttrell, not given to self-deception, felt the clinging hands and knew that the law of necessity—as well as tenderness—made them an eternal charge. He was no dreamer. Of dreamers there are many kinds, but the key to their apparent irresolution is not the fear of realities, but egoism—the shirking of all things or anything which might involve a sacrifice or a responsibility. Other men, not timorous of life, will refuse to believe that happiness is either so easy or so simple as God has made it. They make trouble the measure of prizes worth holding. But it must be picturesque, eventful, agitating trouble—not the constant burden of some heart quickly learned, capricious in small moments, invariable only in its helplessness. In the bold acceptance of this care—a possibility in every union between men and women—we find the test

of perfect and pure devotion. Rosabel's face had caught his senses,—yes, but her timid, almost immature, affection had imprisoned his whole being—making him sovereign lord as ruler, and slave as judge. They would be for evermore together—two upright souls moving in obedience to the one law of life—love, and in defiance of the city, its watchmen, and its snarling curs. She walked, always leaning against him, toward the door. At the door, they clung to each other and kissed again and again—too overcome with feeling to utter a word. He saw her into her carriage, and watched her drive away. This, they had agreed, should be their last parting before she signed herself—*Rosabel Luttrell*.

CHAPTER VI

“ To slip once
Is incident, and excused by human frailty :
But to fall ever, damnable.”

“ These are the fruits
Of marriage ! an old bachelor as I am,
(And, what’s sure, will continue so)
Is not troubled with these fine vagaries.”

“ The rewards of life are contingent upon obedience
to the whole law—physical as well as moral.”

WHILST the Piper and his Rosabel were lingering, half in tears, over their tender momentary farewell, Carrie Ceppel, Archie Wardle, and Sir Courtenay were holding an agitated discussion in Lady Ragot’s tiny house in Chester Terrace. Lady Ragot, who looked like a very pretty doll who had, by some accident, got wrinkled, was propped up on an old Louis Quinze bedstead in the cupboard which did duty for a

drawing-room. She wore a black silk tea-gown and a graceful frizzy wig of blonde, childish hair. Sir Courtenay, Carrie, and Wardle stood around her—for they were all too excited to sit down on the small gilt chairs which were just visible in the dim light permitted to steal through a rainbow effect of several gauze window-curtains.

“He would eat an immense lunch,” Lady Ragot was saying, in a cooing voice, “and when the attendants were having their recreation, he took a boiling bath, which did something or other to his digestion ! He might have lingered on for years, but for that bath. It is Providence, of course.”

“A happy release,” said Carrie, with piety. “And what did he have to live for ?”

“And the expense—for luxuries he could not possibly appreciate,” exclaimed Sir Courtenay : “fifty-five guineas a week ! But I always said that the Trustees were rooked over that bargain !”

"The question now is Rosabel.—Ought we to tell her at once?" asked Wardle.

Carrie said: "Certainly not, we must get her to Palermo first. We must get her away from Jocelyn Luttrell. We must break the news to her by degrees."

"She won't like that," said her mother, after a moment's reflection.

"She may not like it, but we must save her from her own madness. We can't let her marry Luttrell. What a nice brother-in-law for Beauleigh!"

"And Beauleigh is behaving extremely well," observed Sir Courtenay: "his fool of a mother is against Susie, but that makes him all the keener."

"We can't keep the news back for more than a couple of days, you know," said Wardle.

"Every minute is valuable now. Beauleigh is coming to tea this afternoon," said Carrie: "Odo is altogether on his side,

He thinks him the nicest of all Susie's friends. There's not much in him, he's rather weak, I know, but strong characters do not make the best husbands by any means."

Lady Ragot had too much confidence in the beauty of her three girls to feel the least anxiety about their marriages. If one Duke failed, another would surely crop up. It was never any fear relating to their marriages which distressed her. But their love-affairs—ah, those awful love-affairs! She looked sadly from Carrie to Courtenay, from Courtenay to Archie Wardle, and shifted all the rings from one of her hands to the other.

"It is sad, all the same, to think that I shall never again hear poor Tommie say—'What date do you make it?'" she murmured, with a catch in her breath; "but," she continued, in the same tone, "I don't think Rosabel will want to marry this Mr. Luttrell."

"You never can tell what she will do on the spur of the moment," exclaimed Carrie: "she isn't a bit like the rest of us in that way. She seems to like such bounders."

"Is Mr. Luttrell a bounder, darling?" asked her mother.

"No," said the two men at once.

"But he belongs to a very queer set," added Carrie: "Rosabel would never stand them. You must have heard a lot about him."

"No, pet: why should I have heard of him?" she asked placidly: "I never meet these clever people. Is he good-looking?"

"Good-looking, Mama?" said Carrie, losing her temper. "What does that matter? I tell you he is impossible."

"He is not of our kidney, at any rate," said Sir Courtenay; "we don't want him, and we have no use for him. Gad! how can any gentleman be a Radical, and mean it? I hate to see a fellow turning against his own class. It always look fishy to me."

But we haven't settled yet what we are going to do."

It was decided that Rosabel should not be told of her husband's death for at least two days.

"And move Heaven and earth to get her to Palermo," added Wardle.

The party then dispersed, and Carrie reached home in time to receive the Duke of Beauleigh and give him his tea. Rosabel did not appear, nor did she appear at dinner. She was upstairs packing the Shortclough tiara, necklace, and earrings in a strong-box for the bankers. "No more of these," said she, not without regret, for these had been the one compensation for her deplorable married life. She had sent her maid to the theatre, and she spent two hours dressing herself, awkwardly but happily, singing the while like a bird. A new gown, a new hat and a new mantle—ordered in some haste about a week before—had arrived from the dressmaker's that

afternoon. These she put on for the first time. At seven she left the house, carrying the Florentine notebook and a jewelled bag which contained some blank cheques, a small gold powder-box, and a thumbnail edition of the Psalms. Luttrell was waiting for her, impatiently, with his carriage, in Curzon Street. A bright new moon shone, out in the sky: the night was clear, cold, and unusually silent—for the whole of London was in mourning. The two were driven off at a furious pace to Queen Anne's Gate.

"My wife," said Luttrell, briefly, to his housekeeper (who was most respectful), just as he had planned to say it. Rosabel endeavoured to look convinced. But she was too wild with joy at the thought of her own courage, and he was too intoxicated by love and triumph, to care about convictions one way or the other. They closed the library door and swayed to and fro in each other's arms like creatures released

from death in sight of Paradise, while the housekeeper outside picked up something which she took for a love-letter, and read, lest it should fall into the wrong hands. It was a loose leaf from Rosabel's lecture notebook, and it ran thus :

*"The man who lives for merely animal pleasure—eating, drinking, and the like—just because he seeks it as part of a happiness, never finds it to be that which he sought. There is no mistake about the pleasure, but he seeks it as that which shall satisfy him ; and satisfy him, since he is not an animal, it cannot. Nor are the higher objects of desire ever what they seem : even 'the joy of success' has its own bitter-
ness. . . ."*

Odo, Susie, and Carrie dined together without Rosabel, but no questions could be asked till the young girl had gone to bed, and the Ceppels could talk, without the presence of the servants, in Carrie's boudoir. Ceppel never permitted the least conversation in the presence of the servants.

"It is bad form, low class," he would say, "and most dangerous."

"Where *can* she be?" asked Carrie, who had controlled her alarm the whole evening.

Odo shrugged his shoulders. He knew that Rosabel was far more beautiful than his wife, and, with touching loyalty, he disliked her, and disapproved of her on that account. He was a good-looking, red-haired man with square shoulders and an arrogant, determined profile. Rosabel was in the habit of saying, recklessly, that he had the reigning profile but Carrie had the governing will. This assertion may have reached his ears, and added weight to his conviction of her worthlessness. His health was naturally robust, but he was subject to fits of melancholia. "If," said Rosabel "they would only make mutton and mashed potatoes expensive, dear Odo would get perfectly well." This dark utterance had been repeated to him, and he detected an

allusion, in shocking taste, to his very costly table—a tradition in his family for two generations, certainly.

“She must behave herself while she is under my roof,” said Mr. Ceppel, in reply to Carrie’s question: “she and Luttrell are a worthy pair. I won’t permit such conduct for an instant.”

“Of course, it is perfectly all right, Odo.”

“My dear child,” said her husband pompously, “I will not reproach you for trying to think the best of your sister. You are quite incapable of imagining the depths of her turpitude. It is very painful for me to feel compelled to say so—very painful.”

Carrie burst out crying. Odo was always difficult to manage on the subject of “pure acts of folly.” His notions of respectability were hopelessly middle-class and dunderhead.

“I won’t have you upset!” he ex-

claimed: "I begin to wonder whether I am the master of my own house." And he paced the floor, holding one hand in his pocket, and waving the other with authority.

"I know that it is perfectly all right," whimpered Carrie: "she did say something or other—now I think of it—about going somewhere."

"Oh, Carrie! don't tell me lies to shield that unprincipled woman. It's natural, I know, in the circumstances, but don't, don't do it, I beg of you. This is dreadful. Your first deceit. Oh, darling!"

His lips quivered: he drew out a perfect handkerchief with a flourish, wiped his high forehead, and blew his nose.

"I do remember, Odo, indeed I do. And she may have heard of Shortclough's death, after all, and gone straight off to his people."

There was just a possibility of hope in this thought.

"We shall hear from her to-morrow. You see if we don't."

They embraced with tears: no more was said of Rosabel then, but Ceppel returned to the matter when he had his tea at eight o'clock the next morning, and he gave a little lecture till a quarter to nine on the domestic calamities incident to fib-telling, screening guilty persons, and the connivance—no matter how well meant—at disgraceful behaviour.

"You cannot be too severe in such cases," he said: "there is no excuse for them—none whatever. I assure you, I have no mercy." He kissed her pretty face (especially fresh and charming against an embroidered pillow-case) as he spoke, and continued: "As Rosabel has made her bed, let her lie upon it."

"But she has really had a bad time of it, Odo."

"The unfortunate man is dead now. *De Mortuis*. I cannot discuss him."

"But he wasn't always dead, dearie."

"She has her life before her," announced Mr. Ceppel solemnly, as though it were an official declaration.

"Oh yes, now. She will be happier now. I hope she will take poor Jim Wroxall. Franton is a very nice old place."

"I do not care whether she is happy or not. But I do care how she conducts herself while she is under my roof."

"Some people seem to have such temptations, Odo."

"Do not use expressions which you cannot understand. Do I have temptations? Certainly not. People who conduct themselves properly do not know what the word means."

Carrie worked her long eyelashes, and replied that he was probably right.

No word came from Rosabel during breakfast. Ceppel, fortunately, had an engagement in the country to attend a private

Horse Sale. He was to dine and sleep at Sir Marmaduke Rendelsham's, in Norfolk, but he had determined, secretly, to stay two nights or more—because, when it came to the point, he dreaded making the attempt to put his foot down, and he wished, therefore, to give Rosabel as much grace as possible. The “reigning profile” was always in jeopardy whenever Lady Shortclough became a cause of war. He could not remember a single occasion, where she was concerned, on which he had come off really well. She was the Russia of his household politics. With delight, he left his home for Liverpool Street Station, and he had barely passed out of sight before Carrie wrote telegrams to her brother and Wardle : “*Come at once. Urgent.*” She cared nothing about the servants, and the second footman took the two messages to the Post Office. Archie and Sir Courtenay arrived within thirty minutes of each other. Archie, ill, blue, and shaking, because he

was up so early. He was never quite himself, or absolutely collected, till three o'clock in the afternoon. Courtenay was bilious—having missed his morning canter in the Row. Both men were sulky, and said it was perfectly sickening before they heard a single word from Carrie. When she faltered out her fears for the missing Rosabel, they exclaimed simultaneously—

“What did I tell you?”

“But where is she?” asked Carrie, afraid to express her own dread.

“With Luttrell. They’ve bolted. I’ll bet you anything you like,” said Sir Courtenay.

“And don’t imagine that anybody will be surprised,” said Wardle: “but if she keeps her wits about her, she cannot possibly come to grief now. Poor Shortclough being dead makes all the difference.”

Carrie wrung her hands, and made no effort to control her fears. One never could

be sure that Rosabel would keep her head. And then Odo! And then poor little Susie! Beauleigh could not be blamed if he drew the line at such uncalled-for, heartless, selfish goings-on!

"We must do all we can to take the edge off talk," continued Wardle: "people don't care a farthing for anything but how it looks!"

"But," exclaimed Carrie, "we don't know where she is. We must find her first."

Sir Courtenay, however, took the gloomiest view of society.

"What's the use of telling a pack of lies," said he: "in my belief, she done for herself this time. They'll make all manner of promises, and agree to stand by you and see you through, but they won't—no, not by a long chalk!"

"Oh yes, they will. You needn't be so depressing," said his sister.

"Why reproach me for being a man of the world?" replied the Baronet. "Ain't

we in the world? did I make it? I know this much, my girl, if Rosabel comes back with a cock-and-bull story, nobody will believe her. Archie can chime in very pat with his advice, but I shall have to back the story. There mustn't be any story. I'm not going careering about the country trying to gull people. It's not fair to ask me to make such an ass of myself!"

"No one has asked you," said Carrie sharply.

"I am not going to make an ass of myself," he insisted.

"One of us might drop in on Luttrell—to see whether he is missing," was Wardle's next suggestion.

"I have a jolly good mind to chuck up the sponge," said Sir Courtenay, "and clear out to Monte till the affair has blown over."

Neither Mrs. Ceppel nor Wardle were dismayed by these severe threats. This was Sir Courtenay's method of planning a campaign. Already, they both knew, his

brain was busy with diplomatic, strategic, and governmental projects.

"Did she take her sable cloak?" he asked suddenly; "and her diamonds?"

"No."

"Then give her another three hours," he suggested.

"But we must have it all settled before Odo comes back," said Carrie.

"That stands to reason," replied Sir Courtenay.

The three sat in a row around the fire, and whispered their evidence against Rosabel. The chief thing which excited their indignation was her want of prudence. But they all intended to stick to her, to lie for her, to hoodwink Odo to the last gasp, and fight Rosabel's critics while there was breath left in anybody. It was painful. It was shocking. It was deplorable. It was her bringing-up. It was all Mama's fault. Mama was so weak. Luttrell was a blackguard. He was not a gentleman.

This was what you got by being civil to a parcel of d——d outsiders. Society, owing to these intruders and emigrants from lower spheres, was becoming rotten to the core.

"Yes," repeated Sir Courtenay, "rotten to the core. Dear old England is rolling down the hill, I am afraid; but for God's sake don't let it get about that I said so! It might do a lot of harm."

And he snivelled from sheer desolation of spirit. Carrie cried. Archie cried.

"I am sure," sobbed Carrie, answering an unspoken doubt which gnawed each of their hearts, "we have always been kind to Rosabel."

"Kind? Too kind," said Sir Courtenay: "a damn sight too kind—if you ask me."

But the little sharp interior pricks went on nevertheless.

"We mustn't be too hard on her when she comes back. She is not the first," said Carrie, looking at the clock. The three hours' grace was fast running short.

"People are so horrid. They may say that we drove her to it."

"Not a bit of it," said Sir Courtenay: "they never care what or who drives anybody to anything."

They were reduced to this wretched state when a shivering servant (who came up from a similar discussion on the subject of Lady Shortclough in the housekeeper's room) announced Lord Wroxall. He was a dreadful color, and he had been blubbering like a child. This was evident at a glance. He waited till the door was closed, and then stood before them, working his head from side to side.

"It is the most terrible thing," said he: "I have heard from her. She asked me to bring you this," and he gave Carrie a letter.

"Where in the devil is she?" asked Sir Courtenay.

Wroxall felt his throat filling: he swallowed hard, and could make no reply for

a second or two. Then he managed to get out the word—

“Luttrel.”

Carrie had torn open her letter, and was reading it in a state verging on frenzy. When she came to the signature—

“*Your ever affectionate sister,*

“*ROSABEL LUTTREL*”—

she lost her temper completely. If Odo could have heard the gentle and refined Carrie at that moment, his beautifully brushed hair would have stood on end. He would have asked, when he had recovered from the first horror, where she had learnt such language. One has been told of the swearing of troopers. No trooper ever used expressions of greater vehemence than those employed, on this melancholy occasion, by the flower-like Mrs. Ceppel. The three friends of her lifetime sat blinking but unamazed. They knew that the delicate creature was, in certain root char-

acteristics, so very like her lamented grandparent, the dear old Lord Dundrum. The dear old lord had been a sad old rascal, who frequented low haunts and liked to amalgamate, to the manner born, with the lowest company. Carrie, accordingly, in losing her temper, found, as it were, her ancestral lisplings.

"One really cannot blame her," murmured Sir Courtenay in an under-tone: "you cannot wonder at it."

The poor lady grew calm by degrees, and reassumed her normal manner. She asked Courtenay to read the letter aloud—which he did, in the manner of his first cousin, the Under Secretary for the Forts and Coasts—

"*'THE WEST LODGE, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE.*

"MY DEAR CARRIE,—I cannot suppose that you or Courtenay will approve of the step I have decided to take—after much sorrow (whether you believe it or not), and many misgivings, much regret, much painful consideration' "—

THE END

"Frightful affectation," said Carrie, "and humbug."

Sir Courtenay put down the document—

"Am I or am I not reading this letter?" he asked, and resumed

"I do not propose to trouble you with any full account of the many opinions I have formed with regard to our present social system, and especially the laws of marriage'—"

"She never wrote one word of that, of course," said Carrie again: "I detect Luttrell in every syllable."

"Will you give a man a chance?" shouted her brother, by no means in the manner of the Under Secretary this time—

"I have even been disposed to mistrust my own judgment in the matter, because I myself have been so great a sufferer. One fears lest grief, or bitterness—perhaps, too, a strong egoistic desire to escape from a pressing regulation—might make one ill-suited to take a perfectly sane, impartial view of an enormous injustice which has been hallowed by the custom of centuries'—"

"I can't listen to any more!" exclaimed Carrie. "She must be mad!"

"Oh, do go on," said Wardle. He gave Caroline a cross glance, and added: "I wish you wouldn't." This had some effect.

"My union with Mr. Luttrell is, in every way, more binding" —

"Something has been left out, surely?" said Wardle: "it can't be so abrupt—with-out leading up to such an extraordinary remark. . . ."

Sir Courtenay looked at him, and inquired, with politeness, whether he would prefer to read it himself. But he began again—

"My union with Mr. Luttrell is, in every way, more binding and serious than any marriage, because there is more at stake: more sacrifices have been, must be, made: the consequences are more obscure. It is a great experiment, I know, and if it should NOT Succeed,

there will be no sympathy for either of us ; and in any case we must expect misrepresentation.' "

"More binding than any marriage!" cried Wardle, jumping on to his small feet : "I should think so. Any fool knows that. Then why go in for it? Where is the sense?"

Carrie looked deeply aggrieved, and kept her eyes fixed on space. Wroxall made a remark for the first time. He had been standing with his head against the window-pane, trying to cool his burning forehead.

"You can argue that to any extent you like," said he, "but if you take the bitterest Puritan view of the situation, you won't mend it. Besides, what right have we to throw stones?"

"Will you tell me *how* we ought to act?" asked Carrie.

"I feel bound to say," he replied, "that my sympathies are with her. She has

taken a plucky line. I don't care for these small and peddling bits of morality which are so popular just now. Give me one thing or the other."

"Very pretty," said Carrie drily: "but who would marry her—after this?"

"I would," answered Lord Wroxall.

CHAPTER VII

"The very essence of a true reformer consists in his being the corrector and not the exponent of the common feeling of his day."

"When we have split up the affections into a quantity of organs, balancing and checking one another, and, in the hurry of modern life, have scarcely leisure to give ourselves up to any strong emotion, it is hard to appreciate the dramatic unity of the divers workings of some intense passion."

"Fortune knows
We scorn her most when most she offers blows."

Pierrot. "Je te dis toujours la même chose, parceque c'est toujours la même chose; et si ce n'était pas toujours la même chose, je ne te dirais pas toujours la même chose."

ROSABEL and Luttrell, meanwhile, were spellbound by happiness. Life seemed, all at once, to have a sacred simplicity. They looked into each other's eyes and wondered why other mortals were so blind to the

divine element in human existence. Why? why? Who, for love and trusting to it, could not bear anything, suffer anything?

They were at their luncheon, talking and laughing together, forgetting time, destiny, and the world, when Beylestein was ushered in upon them. Luttrell kept an open house for all those associated with the Movement: they dined, slept, or took breakfast at the West Lodge when they pleased. His servants, also members of the Movement, were especially trained, and proved equally efficient as messengers, cooks, agents, or valets. The Jesuit organisation is admirable: the Socialists have learnt a great deal from their example. Beylestein was introduced to Rosabel, and at first he disliked her: she struck him as a fine lady—his idea of a King's Mistress. As she showed some intelligence, however, in conversation, he became less timid (refined stupidity was the one thing he feared), and he made more excuses for Luttrell's

folly. But Rosabel's grace, her musical voice, her fashionably arranged hair got altogether on his nerves: could she appreciate the true meaning of "*ein Mann zu sein*"? He heard himself shouting, he felt too bulky for the room (a room in which, heretofore, he had always felt thoroughly at ease), he had a suspicion that she was finding him uncouth,—a peasant, in fact, an inferior. So he ordered rum, loudly, in a spirit of defiance, and loaded his plate with two or three kinds of meat—as he would not have done had he been by himself, or alone with Luttrell. He behaved, in fact, like a little boy who wishes to be thought abandoned.

"You will have to go to Marseilles," he said, pointing his knife at Luttrell and speaking with his mouth full; "you will have to go to-night."

Rosabel, determined to shine as the worthy mate of an important man, forced a smile.

"You said," she replied, turning to Jocelyn, who looked grave, "that we might have to go this week."

"It is no place for ladies," said Beylestein, stacking a *bonne bouche* in the shape of a pickled walnut, some minced ham, a piece of cheese, and a little red-currant jelly on his fork: "you couldn't possibly go there. It would be exposing you to danger. There's a big storm brewing."

Rosabel laid her hand on Luttrell's arm, and made an entreating movement toward him—

"I can go, can't I?" she said: "the danger makes it the more necessary."

Beylestein showed his superb white teeth, and glanced—not unkindly—at the young man.

"No! no!" said Luttrell; "it would be wrong to take you. I mustn't think of it. I may have to disguise myself."

"How exciting!" cried Rosabel, re-

membering comic operas : " I should love that."

Beylestein, with a delicacy of his own, pretended to want some more ham, went to the sideboard, and so turned his back upon the lovers.

" I cannot take you," said Luttrell, holding Rosabel's hand ; " you have soon had to learn what an uncertain life mine is. I am a bird of passage. . . . You remember ? I told you."

" But you won't leave me," said Rosabel : " how can you leave me ? Am I a doll ? Other women are there, surely."

" Yes, other women are there, but . . ."

" You think I can't rough it, or do without a maid ? You think I should be frightened, or a hindrance ? I will go . . . it isn't fair to me . . . you make me out a fool."

" These other women, darling, are brought up to the life—trained to it"—

" One must begin some time. Let me

begin at once. Why am I here—if I am not to share your whole life? That was the idea. I wasn't 'to sit on a cushion, and sew a fine seam, and feed upon strawberries, sugar, and cream'! Ah, dear, I know you mean it because you want to protect me. I know that. But I shan't be happy unless I can be useful, and unless I have something sensible to do. I have given up my old life—you must let me take my part in yours. Look at Mrs. Botha. I want to be like Mrs. Botha. That's living."

Beylestein, with a forced, nervous cough, now left the sideboard, bringing a plate of pressed beef—for which he had no appetite—with him. He found Rosabel's eyes swimming in tears, and Luttrell gnawing his under-lip—not because he was in the least undecided, but because he was under Beylestein's command. Socialism has also learnt its lesson from the Army discipline.

"Let her go, then," said Beylestein briefly. He had his sentiment : a pretty woman crying was—a pretty woman crying, whether she entirely understood the sense of "*ein Mann zu sein*" or not. Besides, she could perhaps be of service in several ways.

"There ! He says I can go. You see ?" cried Rosabel. "Turk ! You want to keep me shut up !"

"You ought not to be exposed to danger, all the same : you don't understand . . ." said Luttrell, with a glance of such devotion that Beylestein himself felt that Arcadia could not be far off. He remembered certain poems he had written in his early youth to a curate's daughter named Margaret. . . .

"Ever since I was born I have been told that I don't understand," said Rosabel ; "but I do. . . ."

Beylestein shouted with laughter, and slapped Jocelyn on the back,

"You hear that?" said he. "All right : henceforth, madame, I am on your side. Appeal to me when your good husband does not believe in you !"

He proposed her health, and made her, in the purest German, a charming speech.

"By the bye," said he presently, after they had discussed several matters, "a great many charities need reforming. I heard the other day of a Home for Reclaimed Girls. They call them Fallen Women. They go to this Home to repent, and they wash clothes all day till they go mad, or run back to the streets ! Charitable ladies subscribe to that Institution."

Rosabel flushed. She knew that many charitable ladies would probably regard her as a Fallen Woman—in need of repentance, hard labour, many stripes.

"They go mad," repeated Beylestein, "washing out the linen of the virtuous—in order to pay their expenses. There's a picture for Dante !"

"Terrible," said Luttrell, wishing, however, that Beylestein would choose pleasanter topics. Rosabel was not Mrs. Toring-Seafeld, and she was very young.

"The upper classes," continued Beylestein, "the intolerable classes, I should say, composed of women who will not suffer, and men who will not work, must soon die out. People attacked the monasteries long ago. Well—they may have had their faults. But now, instead of them, we are building madhouses, and instead of churches—prisons and hospitals! Ah, we want more health everywhere—health of body and health of soul. 'Man goeth forth unto his labour until the evening.' Let all pleasure-seekers remember that!"

The agitator talked vigorously on the subject for half an hour, and then, after whispering something hurriedly but most seriously to Luttrell, took his departure in a whirlwind of good-humour.

"What did he say to you? What is the

matter?" asked Rosabel, when the visitor had gone.

Luttrell's brow had darkened: he seemed to have new, deep lines around his eyes: he held her closely, even desperately, in his arms, but his mind was engrossed, she saw, by some nightmare.

"It is merely business," he answered. "I must go down to my banker's at once. I went security for a very large amount."

"And you may lose it?" she said lightly. All the Ragots were quick at grasping money questions. "This often happened to poor Papa!"

"There is that possibility: not to mince matters, probability."

She put her cheek against his, and gained strength from the contact.

"Then we may have to be poor, Lyn?"

"Very poor. But I didn't expect it. I have often stood security before—not that I ought to mind this, the money will be used for a good purpose. Yet . . ."

"We have each other."

"But you have never been poor," he said.

"Ah, I have you . . ."

"Why should the news come to-day?" he exclaimed: "it is a thunder-clap—all the harder because I must not resent it. But if the worst happens, I can earn money. You shan't suffer. You shall have everything—just the same."

"I am glad that the news comes to-day," said Rosabel, "because I can prove at once that my life is your life, dearest."

"It is impossible to love anyone so much as I love you," exclaimed Luttrell: "if anything should hurt you, I think I would kill the whole world! You make me ten thousand times more determined than I ever was."

He knelt at her feet, put his arms round her waist, and she bent over him weeping tears of happiness.

"We can live abroad . . . in little

rooms," she said, "or quite charming rooms—if one goes to some nice place a few weeks out of the regular season. . . . What do we care? And the poor workmen on strike, their wives and their children. . . . we don't grudge them the money . . . Luckily, we are young and strong. . . . we can begin for ourselves . . . Let us show people what can be done!"

This speech, expressed in childish language but with true feeling, gave him a dozen ideas for a new state of society . . . a re-created earth. He felt almost mad with adoration. There were hundreds of women in Russia and Germany, he knew, who had shown, who were always ready to show, sublime courage, but Rosabel had not lived in an heroic atmosphere . . . the life she had seen was the very life which the Movement abhorred, and rebelled against—idle, vicious, unscrupulous, selfish, above all silly.

"We can do anything," he said, "not by

talk, not by money, not by genius, but by love, by work."

"And I may go with you to Marseilles?"

"Yes! how could I leave you behind . . . now. Besides, Beylestein gave his permission."

"Are you under him?"

"He is my Chief at this moment. It is too complicated to explain now. But we have to obey orders."

"I thought you were all fighting for liberty."

"But you can't fight—even for liberty—without some system."

"Then it is really substituting one kind of government for another?"

"Justice and freedom for injustice and slavery."

"Well," she said, shaking off a desire to argue, "we intend to do our best, anyhow. Poor people have many grievances, and as we are going to be poor ourselves, we shall

be allowed to have an opinion on the subject!"

She then went to rest before her journey that night, and he drove off to the City. They had agreed that if he did not return by dinner-time she was to meet him at Victoria Station. He had to make a number of arrangements. How hard it was to say good-bye—for two hours!

Sir Courtenay, having sworn that he would not be dragged by the coat-tails into business of which he thoroughly disapproved, was much cheered by Lord Wroxall's magnanimous view of Rosabel's conduct. He became animated and resourceful, at once: told Carrie that her strictures on the ill-advised, but good-hearted rebel, were "trivial in the extreme," He went on to say that severity would be "a measure in the wrong direction," and he undertook to recover the wandering sinner in a personal interview,

"Shall we tell Mama?" said Carrie, also reduced to mildness by Wroxall's astonishing generosity. Yes, Mama ought to be told. Mrs. Ceppel, too impatient to wait for her carriage, drove off in a hansom with Archie to Chester Terrace, and broke the news to Lady Ragot. Her ladyship received the shock over a glass of very old sherry (a present from the Queen Regent of Spain) and a biscuit.

"We do not know our children," said she, with a placidity which arose from a total absence of conviction. She knew her children quite well enough. Each one represented a psychological crisis in her own life. She could account for Carrie's admirable sense, Rosabel's wildness, Susie's light heart, and Sir Courtenay's fatal but most discreet attachment and fidelity (an affair of twenty years' duration) to an ignominious Miss Clotilda Parry. (One little darling, Miss Daisy Parry—strangely like Susie, but of more aristocratic appear-

ance—danced nightly at the Ganymede Theatre, and was supposed to be Sir Courtenay's only daughter.)

"We do not know our children," murmured Lady Ragot.

"Courtenay is going to watch his opportunity, and call on Rosabel when Luttrell is out of the house. He is planning it with Jim now. Jim is behaving simply awfully well. He says he'll do anything, and he respects her tremendously, and all that. She's very lucky, I must say. But ugly men are always kinder than the others. They are not so spoilt."

Lady Ragot then observed, as a piece of ordinary information, that she had received a dear letter—the dearest letter—and a call, from the Duke of Beauleigh.

"A sweet boy! Quite really of the old school!"

"You might have told us before!" said Carrie. But she and Wardle instantly assumed an air of boredom. A conquest,

once achieved, is often accepted as an inevitable commonplace—an event about which there could have been no doubt at any moment.

“I suppose,” said Mrs. Ceppel, showing the greatest indifference, “that we ought to regard that as most satisfactory—so far.”

“I am very pleased,” admitted Lady Ragot graciously, “very pleased. Delighted. It will be so pretty to see such a dear young couple. And they are so much in love. Boy-and-girl marriages are sweet. I am glad that they seem to be coming in fashion again. And then their darling, darling babies! They will grow up together with their parents. Can you imagine a more charming idea?”

She adored babies: there were photographs of babies and young children—all with immense eyes and fluffy hair—placed on every table in her house. She had been godmother to dozens, and she always re-

membered their names, their birthdays, and whether they cried or not at their christenings.

"Courtenay must be told at once," said Carrie: "Rosabel must be told. If the old Duchess hears about Luttrell—well, it will be hard for Harry. You will admit that, Mama."

"Not if he loves her," said Lady Ragot sentimentally.

"Not if who loves whom?" asked her daughter, getting angry.

"Not if Harry really loves darling Susie," said Lady Ragot. "His letter is beautiful. I was deeply touched."

"But the old Duchess," said Wardle, "is no lambkin."

"And it will be very hard to answer her," said Carrie: "she will have everybody on her side."

Mrs. Ceppel then kissed her Mama's soft cheek, and bustled out of the room, taking Wardle. The two, chattering,

shivering with excitement, and worn out, drove back to Chesterfield Gardens. Sir Courtenay was there, eating his lunch in the presence of Wroxall, who could touch nothing. Archie fell into a chair and ordered a cup of Benger's Food. Carrie took tea and *foie gras* sandwiches. Then she told her latest news—speaking calmly, although a bright red spot burned in each of her cheeks.

"My dear girl," said Sir Courtenay, "old Mother Beauleigh shall not crow over *us*! Leave Rosabel to me."

And, choosing one of Odo's most expensive, favourite cigars, he left the house and went straight to the West Lodge, Queen Anne's Gate.

"Was Mr. Luttrell at home?"

"No, Mr. Luttrell had gone out."

"Was—anyone else at home?"

The servant checked a gasp, and replied that everyone else was engaged.

"I think somebody will see me," said

Sir Courtenay, pulling out his card-case. Rosabel had heard his voice, however, and to his astonishment, she came out into the hall from the library.

"Is that you, Courtenay?" said she.

He crossed the threshold, controlling his rage at her bare-faced self-assurance, and followed her into the fine room where she had evidently been writing letters. The room and the style of house impressed him rather favourably, but when the door was closed, he looked behind him, around him, waited and said—

"Mad-woman!"

Rosabel sighed. She had known that this scene would have to be, but she had expected a newer name.

"I hope," he continued, "that you ain't going to tell me that you and this man are like brother and sister."

"No," said Rosabel, with a flash of her eyes, "I am not."

Sir Courtenay, somewhat appeased by

such straightforwardness, said: "Because that would have been a bit thick!"

"Before we say anything else," said Rosabel, "I must ask you to avoid any reference to Jocelyn. I am a free agent, and my own mistress."

"Really!" said Sir Courtenay, with a sniff. But he sat down, crossed his legs, and stared at her.

"This," he continued, "is the rummest go—bar none. It isn't practical, my dear girl. I have not the least doubt but that you have been taken in. I have been in love myself." A genuine gloom, at this confession, passed over his features. He cleared his throat, and, with a brave movement of the shoulders, expanded his chest. Amelia Clotilda Parry had been, was, no joke.

"You can take what I say in good part. I have been there!" he observed. "It isn't good enough!"

"Many are ready for this step," said

Rosabel, "but none dares to move first. I have dared. I intend to face every conceivable penalty."

"Ah! you don't say so? You must see that remaining here is out of the question?"

"Of all places in the world, this is my place,—in my husband's house," replied his sister.

Sir Courtenay stared at her again.

"Husband? If you don't believe in marriage, what's all this damn silly cant about husbands? I don't see my way to it. There was never, in my opinion, a greater scoundrel than Luttrell. It is scandalous!"

"Once more, no personalities. I won't stand them."

"Look here, Rosie. You'll compromise yourself, you'll ruin yourself, and then you won't get him—no, nor half of him. He is thinking of Jocelyn Luttrell's liberty—just you bear that in mind. Your own

consummate folly and infatuation blinds you to his selfishness. I know men."

"You may know yourself," said Rosabel :
"you certainly don't know Jocelyn."

"Don't be a fool. It suits his purpose uncommonly well to jaw, jaw, jaw on all this Radicalism. Ho! I should think so. Make a clean sweep of the business, settle it on any terms, and come back to Carrie's with me. Not a soul knows of it—not even Odo. Poor old Jim is crying like a child—he's so upset, but he's as loyal as loyal to you. That's a *man*!"

Rosabel bit her lip, and said—

"You don't understand people who are in earnest."

"I know when a man means the right thing. Luttrell can't respect you."

She stamped her foot.

"Will you be quiet? I tell you he does respect me. I wish you would go away. I tell you he does respect me!"

Sir Courtenay condescended to the homely

eloquence of touching the tip of his nose with the end of his thumb.

"We know all about that!" he replied.

"After all . . . he himself warned me, people would say this. I have considered that possibility, too."

"He is about as clever as they make 'em, is Mr. Jocelyn Luttrell. You may be mad: I'll swear he isn't. You would have to get up very early in the morning to steal a march on that young man. But let me tell you this: You can play the giddy ox with your own life, and give Odo the right to throw you in Carrie's face whenever it suits him. That will make quite a boom for Socialism! That will make a lot of people take very kindly indeed to such infernal rot! But you will kill your sister Susie."

"Susie!" she said, becoming white.

"Yes, madam. Your sister Susie. Beauleigh has proposed in the most manly, honourable manner,—(really, one has to be surprised at anything ordinarily decent in

our family),—and he is prepared to fight his relatives inch by inch on any fair and square issue. But right is right, all the world over, and no one but the most utter fool would pretend that he could stomach this, or snap his fingers at it. This is wholly unjustifiable. I defy you to make out your case.”

“Susie!” she repeated blankly. “I never thought of Susie!”

“Leaving everything else out—is it right to sacrifice the poor child’s future?”

“Susie!” she said again.

“And for a man you’ve known five or six weeks! If it had been as many years, now. But five or six weeks. There’s precious little persuasion in five or six weeks. Oh, it looks bad—especially for you. You have put yourself in the wrong, and no mistake. He would get let off pretty easy—in most people’s judgment. They would say, ‘Well, what can you expect?’ I know ’em.”

Rosabel scarcely heard these remarks. She was thinking of poor little Susie. The Beauleighs were the most conventional people in England . . . their morals had an Evangelical rigidity. Harry Beauleigh was a model youth of unimpeachable character: his mother was not more worldly than the mother of Jacob. She had no mercy on the daughters of Heth. Rosabel remembered a ridiculous verse, freely quoted at Oxford—

*There was Harry Augustus, Duke Beauleigh,
Who was good, you know, really and truly,
When he saw pretty dears
Look at him with their leers
He wished them to—Heaven, did Beauleigh.*

These lines kept ringing through all her thoughts, louder than Sir Courtenay's voice, louder than the sound of the world—

He wished them to—Heaven, did Beauleigh.

“I tell you straight,” said Sir Courtenay, “I, for one, haven't the cheek to ask Harry

to sit tight. We should have to make Susie herself release him from the engagement. Hang it all! we owe something to our own pride. That old viper, Mother Beauleigh, will brag of having beaten us. . . . See you through? Yes, we shall have to see you through. I suppose you have counted on that. You have been perfectly willing to sacrifice us all for a d——d outsider.”

“ You are very cruel,” said Rosabel, with a sudden rush of tears.

“ A day will come when you’ll thank me on your knees for every word I’m saying. Don’t cry, old girl. As Carrie says, you are not the first. Come back to Carrie’s with me, and the past shall be a sealed book.”

“ Of course, I can do no such thing.”

“ Then come back till Susie is married. Let Susie get settled, anyhow. Be fair about it, at least. Give somebody else a chance. Luttrell will think the more of

you—for being a little stand-off. It's late in the day for that now, but it's always worth while !”

“ Oh, have ideals ! have ideals ! ” she exclaimed.

“ I hope you don't call this particular game ideal ? The less names we call it the better. Luttrell is a bad lot. He has not behaved like a gentleman. Don't tell me that there was any necessity for such an extreme step. As for his being fond of you—why, I could laugh for a year. I don't pretend to be out of the way, but I have known one or two thundering nice women in my time, and I know what I thought about them. Nothing to be ashamed of—that's certain. I had reactions, of course, and no good woman ever upset my habitual cynicism for long. But that is my fault. The point is that I knew devilish well I wasn't fit to take charge of anybody worth having. There ! And that is what Luttrell would have known—if he

had been even the beginning of a gentleman. A gentleman is a fellow who doesn't undertake a thing unless he can see it through in proper style."

Rosabel still paced the room, clenching her fists, biting her lips, and dashing the hot tears from her eyes.

"Jocelyn wishes to do good—to understand life," she said: "he would judge you more kindly than you judge him. He would own that you were honest enough—for an utterly heartless libertine. As he says, you cannot change the leopard's spots, but you can perhaps help the leopard to be a decent leopard. That is what he is working for."

"And he picks up a daisy or two as he goes along! Well, you are a bigger goose than I took you for. It's pathetic."

She seemed to be living seven lives at once,—her own, Luttrell's, Susie's, Carrie's, Courtenay's, Wroxall's, Lady Ragot's. Each one of these had a certain claim upon

her: each one assumed a certain right to question her conduct, because her history was bound up, in one degree or another, with theirs.

"Is one ever independent?" she asked bitterly: "is one ever so placed that one has given no hostages to fortune?"

"No," said her brother.

"I want the right and the peace to go my own way with the one man in the world I care for."

"That is all that any woman wants," said Courtenay: "it sounds charming."

"If I want to leave society and live on a little dust-heap, asking nothing from anybody—why shouldn't I?"

"This," observed her brother, looking round the room, "is about the snuggest dust-heap I have seen for a long time!"

"Yes," she said, shaking now with anger, "thank God, it is!"

"I should leave out the *thank Gods*," he murmured drily, "that sort of thing

isn't exactly on all-fours with this sort of thing!"

"Don't try to be funny," said Rosabel; "please, please, Courtenay, don't try to be funny. It is awful."

"I didn't mean to be unkind, honour bright. Will you come back with me, and see Carrie? Have you got the pluck to face the music at home?"

"I promised Lyn not to leave the house till he returned."

Sir Courtenay put on his hat.

"He has made you a coward already."

"But," she answered, "he could not have foreseen this business about Susie."

With an air of resolution which made her seem, to her brother, greatly altered, she went to the table and wrote a note.

"There!" she said, standing up. "Now I'll come. I can face any music, and I will face it alone. The suggestion that I have been influenced against my judgment is absurd."

But the vulgarity, the infectious common-sense of Sir Courtenay's criticism had fastened like a swarm of wasps upon her heart of hearts.

"I must tell you how unhappy I feel!" she exclaimed suddenly: "I never really expected to hear such things. I wanted to have a peaceful time—away from London ideas and moods and judgments. Jocelyn is always chivalrous, understanding, kind: he makes me forget the world and all it can say. But now this avalanche, this *tourbillon* of unthinkable horrors, this poison! Why did you come? Why did I listen to you? Is nothing sacred?"

"Nothing except a lawful marriage!" said her brother doggedly.

"Was my marriage with Shortclough sacred?" she asked.

Sir Courtenay shrugged his shoulders.

"You were his wife," said he; "no one could get away from that. There's where you score."

"My God! Then it is just a question of scoring?"

"We are talking about life, ain't we? Well, we can't alter it. Are you coming to Carrie's, or not?"

"I am going to Carrie's. But I was never more determined to have my own way."

While she went to put on her hat and mantle, Sir Courtenay strolled from one bookcase to another, taking stock, as it were, of their contents.

"If the worst comes to the worst," he murmured, from time to time, "although . . . she would be throwing herself away . . . he's not half good enough . . . Jim can buy and sell him fifty times over."

"I am ready," said Rosabel, re-entering the room. Perhaps she guessed Sir Courtenay's thoughts: perhaps she felt a longing to show her brother what moral earnestness involved.

"I ought to tell you," she said, fastening her glove, "that Jocelyn has given nearly all his money to the Cause. We shall be frightfully poor. We can't live in this house."

Sir Courtenay's jaw fell. He looked stupefied : he blushed hard, fumbled with his collar . . .

"Do you mean to say . . . that he has been such an infernal idiot as . . . to . . . ?"

"We both believe in the Movement. We are both in absolute sympathy with Tolstoi. Have you any objection ?"

"Good Lord !" he ejaculated : "this beats all . . . this fairly wins it . . . Gawd Almighty !"

"Lyn's will is my law," she went on : "I don't acknowledge any other law. If you can realise that, we shall be able to come to an understanding. Not otherwise."

"Gawd Almighty !"

She went out first. Sir Courtenay without a moment's hesitation, picked up the note which she had left on Luttrell's blotting-case, and put it into his own overcoat pocket.

"Shall we drive or walk?" he asked, when he and Rosabel were in the street.

"We can walk," she said briefly: "but please don't talk to me. My head aches, and I must think."

CHAPTER VIII

"O terreni animali! O menti grosse!

. . . Quali

Son le mie note a te, che non le intendi,

Tal è il guidicio eterno a voi mortali." ¹

"The one whom nature has marked for a future genius . . . naturally falls in the way of the learned education of his day. Others about him are seeking to arrive at such mental power as may serve them in life . . . one study succeeds another, of a kind and in an order which experience shows to be most useful for the majority. But he is not as they. He is seeking to solve the riddle of the universe. . . . He finds no rest for his soul in the different branches of knowledge till he has the key to their meaning. . . . He to a great degree excludes himself from sympathy with those in whom he should find the nourishers of his strength. . . . Hence 'new beginnings, disappointments new.'"

"I am a creature

So forfeited to despair, hope cannot fancy

A ransom to redeem me."

LUTTREL was not able to arrange matters in the city so easily as he had hoped, but,

¹ "O earthly animals! O gross minds! . . . As are my notes to thee who understandest them not, such is the eternal judgment to you mortals."—*The Paradise of Dante.*

exalted by Rosabel's devotion, he rejoiced at the change in his circumstances. He was even impatient to begin the new, humble life which promised to be so much more their own than any existence spent by the rich among the richer could ever seem. Rosabel's dark-blue eyes haunted him : he heard her encouraging words again and again : he thought how little he deserved her, and he swore that no harsh ground should wound her feet. These, and similar fond hopes—not necessarily foolish because he was young and in love—were filling his mind as he crossed the courtyard of the Bank of England on his way to the Securities Office. Suddenly a man of ordinary appearance all but rose out of the earth, made a commonplace remark, slipped a note into his hand, and disappeared as mysteriously as he came. This note contained some fresh instructions. He was to leave by Charing Cross, not Victoria, and two individuals would be intrusted to his

care. He was ordered to call for them at different times, provide them with dinner and their tickets, and set one to watch the other. All this was in the day's work, but it meant time. He sent a telegram to Rosabel — announcing the change of plan, and telling her where to meet him.

When he reached Charing Cross Station at the appointed hour, and disposed of his two charges—who proved very exacting—(one was supposed to be a Swedish Baroness, and the other a traveller in fancy silks)—he looked in vain for the striking, gracious figure. . . .

“We can't delay our affairs because some woman cannot catch a train,” said Beylestein's agent, who was on the platform. He looked like a Government official—with a waxen countenance, trim side-whiskers, a small imperial, and smooth lank hair. “I'll send her over to you. Get in. Leave her to me.”

"She won't know what to do," said Luttrell huskily. "She is alone. . . ."

"My woman is alone too," growled the other between his teeth, with the outward expression of one saying grace before a good dinner: "you can't expect favouritism at such a moment."

For the first time in his life, Luttrell realised completely what an oath of obedience meant. He, too, in the very fight for independence, had mortgaged his will, his honour, his human love.

"You must go," continued the agent: "there's no help for it."

The bell was rung, doors were banged, the whistle shrieked. Luttrell kept his head out of the window, straining his eyes, through the darkness, for some sight of Rosabel. But she was not there.

What had happened was this:—Rosabel had astonished her sister by agreeing to postpone her journey to Marseilles until Susie's marriage with Beauleigh should

take place. The marriage was fixed for Easter. "And then," said Rosabel, displaying a calmness and determination which silenced the entire family, "I go my own way. Let that be clearly understood."

She left Carrie's, and went, accompanied by Sir Courtenay, to Victoria Station, where she proposed to have an interview with Luttrell, explaining the imperative reason for the postponement of their plans.

"He will think it hard, but he will wish to be fair in all respects," she said. Luttrell, of course, was not at Victoria. The express left at the usual hour, and, as it rushed out of the station, Sir Courtenay, assuming an air of great thoughtfulness, scratched one cheek and thrust his tongue into the other.

"We had better get back to Carrie's," he suggested. "They don't expect Odo till to-morrow."

"Something must have happened," said Rosabel, with a sinking heart, "there is a

mistake. I must go to Queen Anne's Gate and see if he is ill."

"I don't think he is ill," said Sir Courtenay.

"Then what is it?" asked Rosabel.

Ragot almost lifted her into a cab, and, without exchanging a word, they drove to the West Lodge. Here Rosabel's spirit, which had been raised to the highest pitch the whole of that day, began to fail. She asked Courtenay to go into the house and ask if any message had come for her, or if Mr. Luttrell had been home. She would wait in the hansom. She shrank into the corner—unwilling to see the street, the dwelling, or the servant. She seemed to have no right to be anywhere. Sir Courtenay was absent not more than five minutes. He came out pulling a long face, and compressing his small, thin lips. He told the cabman to drive to Chesterfield Gardens. Rosabel had not the courage to ask a single question.

"He has not been there," said he, after a dreadful silence, "and he has sent nothing. I have told the man, who looks confoundedly knowing—I wish I had punched his head—to forward anything to Carrie's. I think Luttrell has gone fast enough. They were putting holland sheets all over the library."

Rosabel allowed herself to be led home in triumph.

"Of course," her white lips faltered, "there will be a letter or a telegram."

Sir Courtenay did have a telegram in his pocket, but he told himself that it would be a crime to inform the poor crazy soul of this: "Why make her more upset?"

At Chesterfield Gardens, Carrie took one look at Rosabel's face and decided that it would be wiser to leave her to the workings of remorse. She was allowed to go to her room, but although beef-tea, quinine, port-wine, and *sal volatile* were sent up to her in exquisite quantities by Carrie's own

confidential maid (who had been in the family for years), they were sent away untouched. At this point it was decided that it might be well to break the lamentable news of Lord Shortclough's death, omitting no detail of the hearty lunch or the boiling bath.

"She will think," suggested Courtenay, "that Luttrell heard that bit of news in the City, and thought he had better make himself scarce. So many men bolt, or marry, when the husbands die. I should rub that in."

Carrie, wearing an air of condescension not unmixed with a mincing cruelty, tripped into her sister's room. She surveyed it admiringly—as though it were one of the many rewards of virtue to have very fine spare rooms in an exceptionally splendid house. It made her blush with pride to think how kind she had been to Rosabel. Her eyes travelled from the walls to the curtains, from the curtains to

the bed. She found the culprit lying, face downwards, full length on the floor, moaning, and beating the ground, feebly, with numb hands. Carrie, stooping, pulled the skirts over her sister's ankle. Then she sat down on the edge of the couch—where she could watch her own face in the mirror over the dressing-table, and made the following remarks:—

“It never rains but it pours. We all feel we ought to tell you, that, as if by a kind of judgment, Shortclough is dead. We heard the news yesterday—before we knew that you had taken the law into your own”—

Rosabel gave a loud cry, lifted her head from the ground, and said—

“Who is dead?”

“Your husband,” said Carrie severely.

“Then why was I not told before? Did Courtenay know that when he came to see me this afternoon? Just answer this.”

She sprang to her feet, walked in a

threatening way to Carrie and shook her by the shoulders. Her hair was unpinned : she looked half out of her mind.

"Did Courtenay know that," she repeated, "when he came to see me this afternoon?"

"Yes . . . no . . . yes," said Carrie, terrified by this exhibition of the ancestral temper: "go away : you hurt me . . . you forget yourself . . . you wicked woman !"

"I will have a proper answer," said Rosabel, still shaking her. "I will not be treated in this way. I won't stand it!"

And then she released her hold to sink again on the ground in a fresh spasm of tears.

"Odo will see these bruises," said Carrie indignantly: "it is too shameful. You are positively dangerous. Poor Odo will say that he has married into a mad family. You wicked woman !"

She went to the glass, and examined her pretty white shoulders from every point of

view. Rosabel's fingers had certainly left rough marks.

"You wicked woman!" she repeated. "How could you? How dreadful to have no self-control!"

"Oh, I daresay," sobbed Rosabel, "I daresay. I didn't mean to hurt you. But you all want to kill me. Lyn! Lyn! Lyn! why don't you save me? why don't you come? Lyn! Lyn! Lyn!"

"This," said Carrie, thoroughly scared, "is delirium."

She rang the bells, and very soon it was known all over the house that Lady Shortclough was utterly prostrated with grief at the shocking death of her husband. She kept calling out his name, or, at least, a name she had for him: she would take no nourishment: her frantic sorrow was of the kind to melt hearts of stone. Sir Gunnerley Jones was soon in attendance.

"Get her abroad as soon as possible,"

said Sir Gunnerley: "she has had *some* great shock, or strain, at anyrate."

Sir Gunnerley did not pretend to swallow the grief story, and as he heard most things about everybody, sooner or later, Carrie once more displayed her sense by dropping her eyelashes.

"Odo," she observed, "thinks it *must* be on poor Shortclough's account. She may have been fond of him."

"Well, take her abroad," said Sir Gunnerley.

"She would be better with friends," suggested Carrie, "perhaps she ought not to leave us. She is always so influenced by those around her . . . the one she happens to be with . . . for the moment."

"So long as she has cheerful society . . ." said Sir Gunnerley, after some reflective hesitation.

"May she have her letters and books as usual?"

"Why not?" said the great man inno-

cently: "if they don't worry her . . . any little distraction . . ."

Several times a day, therefore, a certain number of letters were taken to her room. Luttrell had sent telegrams to *his house* from every stopping-place on his way to Marseilles, lest, by some remote chance, Rosabel had not yet left England. None of these reached her, because Sir Courtenay had been careful to leave no address with the servants at the *West Lodge*. Beylestein, on the afternoon following Luttrell's departure, went to Chesterfield Gardens, and was informed, by Mrs. Ceppel's orders, that Lady Shortclough was out of town. This satisfied him, and he telegraphed to Luttrell,—"*Your wife is on her way.*" Two days afterwards, however, Mrs. Toring-Seafeld called on Carrie, and, in much agitation, demanded an interview.

"My sister," said Carrie, who thought it wiser to hear the person's news, "is prostrated with grief at Lord Shortclough's

death. Would you like to read Sir Gunnerley Jones's bulletin ? ”

“No,” replied Amélie: “I never read bulletins! I came to say that Mr. Luttrell has been badly injured in a street riot at Marseilles. He is now at the hospital there, suffering from concussion of the brain. Will you tell your sister that?”

“I am sure she will be sorry for him—when we can tell her about it,” said Carrie.

“Can she go to him?” asked Amélie bluntly.

Carrie put on a look of blank amazement—“My dear lady! why should my sister go to Mr. Luttrell?”

Mrs. Tarring-Seafeld drew a letter, in Rosabel's handwriting, from her pocket. It bore the compromising signature. Carrie grew pale, and began to shiver like a toy-terrier.

“I trust to your honour,” said she, “not to use that against her. It was a terrible aberration—a moment of madness. She is

paying for it now. Her remorse is terrible to witness."

"Then she deserts him?" said Mrs. Torring-Seafeld. "I suppose you know, too, that he has sacrificed all but the whole of his fortune?"

"I understood," replied Carrie, "that Mr. Luttrell was very viewy."

"Am I to take that message to Marseilles, Mrs. Ceppel?"

"If you have any natural feelings—you will understand our awful position," said Carrie. "Do not drive me to express our opinion of Mr. Luttrell's conduct. My poor sister is very weak, and very young. Men of the world would consider Mr. Luttrell's conduct reprehensible and ungentlemanly in the highest degree. I dare not tell my own husband of the affair. I dare not think of the attitude he would assume toward Lady Shortclough. He is extremely strict."

The interview then came to an end, and Carrie, returning to Wardle and Lady

Ragot, who were at tea in the boudoir, informed them that she thought the woman would never go.

"But," she added, "I daresay she wants Luttrell herself. She is welcome to him!"

That evening Carrie went to Rosabel's bedside and said—

"You need a change, darling. You can hardly go aboard; it would look as though you were running after *him*. Jim has asked me to bring you to Franton. You are fond of Franton, aren't you?"

The wretched Rosabel made a faint sign of agreement, and murmured—

"Anywhere!"

She seemed pent up into one thought—Luttrell had failed her. This beset her whole mind. She never once asked for letters: she supposed that they were all brought to her. She wrote one. Carrie undertook to post it.

"You have said nothing foolish—nothing compromising?" she entreated.

"Nothing," said Rosabel.

But in case that "nothing" might be unwise, Carrie put the letter into the fire, and thought herself morbidly honourable in refraining from reading it. She burnt, in the same way, a letter addressed to Mrs. Tarring-Seafeld, and another addressed to "Professor Ulrich Susemihl-Beylestein, Berlin." Odo, no party to the conspiracy, and as much deceived, though for different reasons, as Rosabel herself, behaved with much unselfishness. He was seriously distressed at the appalling change of his sister-in-law's beauty. Was she going into consumption? He began to like her because he could call her a poor soul, and he permitted his wife to accompany her to Franton. Her moral character may have been shaky," he said to Carrie, "but let the dead past bury the past? She can marry now—if she lives."

Then one day at his Club a certain Eddie Maycraft, who was the best of fellows when

he was sober, took too much of a new kind of cocktail. He would have it, but everyone agreed that it was not his fault. Reggie Toulett, who mixed it for him, knew perfectly well how weak poor Eddie was, and how little he could stand. Eddie, therefore, a real Bayard on hot-water and raw meat sandwiches, happened, under the influence of gin, to see Ceppel dining alone at one of the nicest tables—not too near anything.

“I say, Ceppel,” said he confidentially, in a loud squeaky voice, “what’s this story they’re tellin’ about Lady Shortclough? Did she really go to Dover with Jim Wroxall? and did you catch ’em and bring ’em back?”

He was silenced; he was led off by two of his friends: Ceppel was exhorted to remember that the young ass had a widowed mother whose heart would be broken if it once got about that now and again . . . and so on, and so forth. But Ceppel could

not finish his dinner. He hurried home and sent an Express Letter to Carrie. He took immense pains with the style, because he wrote very seldom: the composition was long, labourious, and dull, but it contained the following passage:—

“ Her guilt and crass folly shade off into each other with such graduated tints that it is hard to decide which is which. But marry Wroxall she must if I am to know her, or if Harry Beauleigh is to be permitted to marry your sister Susie. I shall make it my solemn duty to place the matter unreservedly in the Duchess of Beauleigh’s hands. A party to gross deception I, for one, with God’s help, will never be. I cannot show myself anywhere, for I know what everyone is thinking. They may have made a complete hash of the facts, but there is no smoke without fire. I feel in a measure responsible, and in the last resort public condemnation will fasten upon me. She was under my roof at the time: you cannot get away from this, try how you may. Do you know whether she was with Wroxall on the Wednesday evening? Wire me—‘CHARLES WILL DINE TWENTY-NINTH’ if this is the case, or, ‘AM ASKING MARY TWENTY-FIFTH’ if you have no knowledge

of what actually transpired. I have purposely abstained from putting painful interrogatories to you until this moment, because I was more than anxious to accept Sir Gunnerley's surmise that she had taken too much henbane for her neuralgia and was not quite herself on the Wednesday. Shortclough's death, I am willing to grant, accelerated the crisis, and would account for her present condition—if one had no prior information explanatory in a totally opposite sense. I can scarcely write, and I await your reply with an anxiety so far unknown in my experience, and bound to have a severe reactionary effect on my health. I dare not send for Sir Gunnerley, because he is very sharp, and I should not attempt to take him in if her name was mentioned, which it would certainly be, so I must put up with Dr. Dalton, who never understood my constitution and always orders a milk diet. If I did not know that you would fret yourself, I would much rather consult no one, as Sir Gunnerley in this annoying way is out of the question. How one act of criminal selfishness will bring untold suffering to a dozen valuable lives! The innocent indeed have to suffer for the guilty. Some people might think I have everything to make me happy. They little know.

"Your affec. husband,

"ODO."

“ P. S.—There can be no end to my suspense until I hear that Wroxall intends to do the right thing, which is, obviously, to marry her. Everything is at a dead-lock till this is clear, and announced through the usual channels.”

Mrs. Ceppel, on receiving this communication, was inclined to abandon the whole business, and start, then and there, for her poor Odo. But she had gone too far to recede without grave peril to herself. She had lied to Ceppel : lied to Wardle : lied to Lady Ragot ; lied a little to Sir Courtenay, and wholly misrepresented everything to Lord Wroxall. She had given his lordship to understand that Luttrell, having abandoned her sister without a line, without a message, was somewhere abroad, enjoying himself, no doubt. “She has written to him,” she said, “but he never replies.”

Wroxall declared that such conduct on Luttrell's part was incredible, inconceivable, inexplicable, and he added he could never

have believed it but for Carrie's own word. Once he hazarded a guess very near the truth. Had anything happened to the man? Was he ill? Carrie looked embarrassed, appeared to be wanting a word, and finally stammered—

“There is another woman . . . already. . . . She came to see me . . . handsome . . . a woman of thirty . . . much cleverer than Rosabel, and almost as good-looking. . . . Such a scene! . . . If Rosabel knew that, it would kill her straight off—the finishing touch. . . . What a heartless libertine!”

“And if I were to shoot the beast,” muttered Wroxall, “it would only compromise her. The beast! Curse him!”

Carrie, on the day she received Odo's letter, took Wroxall for a walk through his own woods.

“Dear Jim,” she said, after a prefatory babble about the sinfulness of not looking out for one's property, and the many

obligations of wealth—"those who do not work for their money, have to work in order to keep what has been given to them,"—with much more in the same strain:—"dear Jim, do you know the stupid things people are saying? According to Odo, the story is that Rosabel ran off with you—that you both went to Dover."

Wroxall got very red. His vanity, however, was flattered; he could not help smiling; his gratification began to show itself in his bolder walk, a throwing up of the chin, a defiant, cynical, worldly-wise stare at the trees. He thrust out with his heavy stick at the branches they were passing, and began to talk much more loudly than usual.

"So that's what they say? Well, I suppose it is a natural mistake. Better far to pay no attention."

"But fancy *any* story being about! I hoped it would be kept a secret."

"In London? Impossible. They get hold of something always."

"And what would you do then?"

"To deny it would be the maddest course of all."

"That is what Odo seems to think, too."

"Is he absolutely aghast at the suggestion?" asked Wroxall, beginning to feel rather disreputable, and enjoying the injustice of London slander.

"Well, Jim, I cannot tell you anything contrary to the most perfect truth. You have behaved so splendidly. Odo was not surprised. He believes it. He knew, of course, that Rosabel was fond of you."

"She was certainly very nice to me—till she met that brute."

"A moment of madness . . . a temporary aberration!"

"To be sure. I know I am treading upon delicate ground, but— What is Odo's advice?"

"It is difficult to explain. Odo is so uncompromising."

"Why on earth ought we to stand on ceremony? You remember what I said—that day?"

"Could I ever forget such magnificent generosity!"

They both stopped short. Wroxall took off his hat, and she saw great drops of sweat upon his very bald, oddly shaped head.

"It wasn't generosity," he said, with painful earnestness; "it was my first thought. I couldn't help myself. I meant it then. I mean it now. So long as I live I shall mean it. I love her better than my life. There's no fool like a middle-aged fool, they say, so I won't be sentimental. But I would propose to her to-day—if I thought there was the smallest hope of her accepting me."

Carrie's heart gave a great bound.

"Jim," said she, "you're a king among men—a true friend. It wouldn't be tactful

to mention love to poor Rosabel just yet. She is so humiliated and disappointed ; she must see that she has made such irretrievable sacrifices for an utterly worthless, unscrupulous scamp."

Carrie had told her version of the affair so often that she had succeeded in believing it, honestly, to a great extent, herself. "What have I to gain by abusing the man?" she would ask her conscience from time to time. "I have to make the best of a shameful, disastrous muddle. He hasn't a penny of money, and she can't possibly marry him." Yes, she was merely exercising the greatest prudence and moderation in circumstances of peculiar difficulty. She bore no malice toward any living creature. She would never have told so many lies for her own personal advantage. Mrs. Ceppel, while life went with tolerable smoothness, was a very good woman: honourable, chaste, kind to the poor, benevolent to her neighbours, devoted to her fat, rich Odo and

her trying family. But in an extremity, under the stress of keen discomfort, the threatened loss of some worldly satisfaction, the crossing of her stubborn will, put her on her wits, and you would encounter the lowest form of vulgar cunning. As she now poured falsehood into Wroxall's ears, she felt that she was behaving nobly, because she herself had nothing to gain . . . nothing . . . she had everything she wanted. . . . God, in His Wisdom, had provided most liberally for her, and this was why she could always be sure that her motives, at all times, were altogether above reproach. She believed Luttrell capable of any baseness because he had been rude to her in her own famous, vast drawing-room, and she felt, with all the strength and fury of a narrow mind, that no stone should be left unturned to keep him for ever away from her sister's path.

She pressed Wroxall's arm and continued—

"I cannot tell you what to say. You will know. Her conduct, to say the least, has been hopelessly halting. You must put your foot down, and decide it all for her. She is so weak."

The recurrent note in her speech and correspondence was the *weakness* of Rosabel. And the unhappy, crushed, silent woman, stretched out on a sofa from morning till night, offered but too plaintive evidence in support of the accusation. She was, moreover, unsuspecting. She considered her sister Carrie ferocious, but thoroughly trustworthy. Carrie despised her for having so little acuteness in scenting deceit. Mrs. Ceppel agreed with Courtenay that Rosabel was a born fool. They became more fond of her, however, as they grew more contemptuous. In health she looked, at any rate, an imperial creature, and somehow their superior. They had to treat her with a certain deference. But now that was all changed. She was a poor silly dear,

at their mercy. It was as though they had captured Aphrodite, and proved her but a half-crazed Ophelia. She was resting, as usual, on the sofa when Wroxall and Carrie returned from their walk. Carrie kissed her with tearful, genuine affection, and gave an appealing glance to Jim.

"Pretend to be stern," she whispered, and fled, leaving the two together.

His lordship, fully possessed by the idea that he was the talk of society at last, and the presumed hero of a tremendous scandal, approached Rosabel with an assurance he had never felt, or been able to display, before. She was pale and thin: there were dark lines under her beautiful eyes—which were quite dim with weeping. Jim could scarcely look at this wreck of her youth without lifting up his voice and uttering howls, dog-like in their despair and intensity.

"I wish you would take a drive," said he.

No, she did not care about drives.

"If you would walk a little"—

Oh no : it was so cold.

"Have you all the books. . . ."

She shivered, turned away her head, and said—

"*Je t'en prie* . . . no more books ! Never, never, books, again !"

"Music then ? Mr. Helmore, the organist, plays Beethoven admirably. Sauer heard him, and said so. Would you like him to come ? You can hear the piano from this room."

"No music."

"What would you like ?"

"I want to die, Jim. Oh, Jim ! I want to die !"

"You mustn't talk that way."

"I can't help it. I could have been strong with him. I am too weak and stupid to be by myself. I hate the world. I want to die !"

"That's giving way, you know."

"Is it worth while to live ?"

"What a question—at three-and-twenty !
Why, you are little more than a girl."

"Oh, Jim ! I was so happy once."

"When ?"

"Last month." She dropped her voice, and said : "Why has he left me ? why hasn't he written ? If you knew him you couldn't understand it. I don't know what it means. You are a man. Perhaps you can explain. I wouldn't ask anyone else."

"Well," said Wroxall, "perhaps he isn't altogether a free agent."

"No one could keep him from me—if he wanted to come. But—does he want to come ?"

"A man can scarcely get to Luttrell's age—holding his views, too—without getting a claim upon him—in some direction. It's a mere suggestion . . . a possible excuse for cowardly behaviour."

"I wish I were dead ! But you are wrong—there is no other woman ?"

"Dear Rosabel, he isn't worth a moment's regret. Banish him from your thoughts. Love, after all, is what you give—not what you receive. Your love was beautiful. Never mind his. Banish him from your thoughts!"

"I can't. I have tried. But I don't want to. We were always so happy together."

"Do you know what people are saying everywhere?"

"About Lyn?"

"No ; about me. They say I ran away with you !"

He was so pleased at this notion that he became self-conscious, blushed, and did not notice her expression of horror. To have lost her reputation for the sake of Jim, poor old Jim . . . of the Gargoyle cut. . .

"You !" she cried.

"Yes," said he, putting his hands in his pockets and swaggering a little up and down the room with a clumsy gait. No

attitude, no action could have shown him to greater disadvantage. He looked ridiculous. She compared him with Luttrell, and nearly cried with mortification to think that the world had so misjudged her taste.

"It is awkward, isn't it?" he asked.

She began to say: "They would never believe that!" but she checked the cruel remark, and bit her lip till the blood came.

"What is more," said Wroxall, wrongly encouraged by her silence, "the story has assumed the most serious proportions. If we deny it, they may start on a new tack—the very thing we all want to avoid. On the whole, it is the best way out of the maze. Don't you think so? I am not surprised that they pitched upon me. It was a legitimate inference. Luttrell was a ship that passed in the night. But they all know"—

He stood at the foot of the sofa, waiting for some reply,

"Dear Jim," said she, laughing nysterically: "I seem to have compromised everybody I know ! No one has escaped !"

"I only wish to God it were true," he said. "I only wish it had been me."

"You would not have deserted me, anyhow," said Rosabel: "you would have stuck to me and not—not—left me to fight them all alone. (Oh, Lyn !)"

"I am glad you feel that," he answered: "we are such, real true, old friends that we can be sure of each other no matter what happens. I don't want to take any advantage of your present unhappiness, dear, but the thing has reached a climax. We must think of rather desperate remedies, You mustn't be talked about . . . for your own sake, and then, for Susie's."

"I have done enough for Susie," she exclaimed, with a sudden burst of anger. "I signed my own death-warrant. Oh ! oh ! oh !"

"Try and think quietly," said the patient

man. "You have done a great deal, but you must do a little more. Can you guess what I am going to suggest?"

"No; life is beyond my guessing now."

"Well, will you give me the legal right to look after you? I ask nothing . . . mind, nothing in return . . . nothing, till you yourself . . . mind, I ask nothing . . . just the right to look after you, to protect you."

He had, of course, a strong hope in the depths of his heart . . . a very strong hope that she would come round in time . . . under the influence of brighter scenes, a gayer climate, his long, long unswerving devotion . . . she would come round . . . once that legal right settled.

"How dear and good you are, Jim," she said, closing her eyes because he was looking his worst. His livid face was puckered into a hundred wrinkles.

"I ask nothing," he repeated, with the inspiration of true love.

"I cannot forget Lyn," said she. "I cannot, cannot, cannot, will not forget him!"

"I know you cannot forget him," answered Wroxall, wincing, nevertheless; "how could you forget him so soon? That is why I ask nothing. You and I will be as we have always been—just good friends. I am no longer very young. I know what I am saying, and I know my own mind. When I promise to be your friend, you may trust me."

"Would you be happy on such terms?"

He knew that he would be miserable. He replied, therefore—"Far, far happier than I have ever been, at least."

"But I want to die. That's the answer to everything."

"You have lost your spirits. They'll come back again. Now, what do you say?"

"You will think me wicked and selfish. I don't care what happens. My life seems to have gone to pieces."

"Then let me decide for you?"

"Will you take me away from all of them?"

"I will take you round the world, if you like."

"But I had such ideas, Jim. I wanted to work among the poor, and give up the old frivolous business."

"You shall do just as you please."

"You have got very quiet tastes yourself, haven't you?"

"If you are content, I ask no more."

"But it will mean the country-house life, and the season, and the same tedious, boring round. That eternal Bridge, and the inane talk: the stupid race-meetings. I'm so sick of them. And then the political lot—prosy, or insincere, or out of office, or on their hind-legs, or too clever for me. Oh, don't look hurt, Jim. It is all perfectly right when one is happy at home. But I am wretched, and I have no home—no *chez moi*. How awful it was with Short-

clough! Dear, good angel-Jim, you don't want me to answer you now?"

"The sooner the better—because of gossip, and because of Beauleigh, and because of Odo. Poor Carrie is worried to death. And then—the little right I ask for would make me so proud, so happy. You see I am selfish!"

"If I could only die—that would be the best thing, dear. I know I am morbid. But I have had such a wretched time of it."

"You must guard against exaggeration."

"Help me to think of Lyn as though I had not taken—that step. If you only knew how he always seemed to love me!"

"Well," said Wroxall, "women—that is, good women, don't know the real signs of love. It is easy to deceive them."

"Perhaps we were made to be deceived. Perhaps we would never agree to many things in life unless we were deceived."

"My dear, you loved him, and therefore trusted him."

"No ; that isn't the word. I loved him, and therefore I obeyed him. I suppose it was weak of me."

"I am afraid so, dear Rosabel."

"When I was a girl of sixteen, I visited an old French Marquise who was a friend, long ago, of Papa's. She said to me, 'When you grow up, strive to be a good mother of brave sons : think holy thoughts : give your eyes all you can find in true beauty : pray for your husband : ask him no questions : place your happiness in God and your children.' I begin to see now what she meant."

"Marriage in any case. Men understand men well enough when they shirk the legal tie. It doesn't leave any room for doubt as to the nature of their affection. I must tell you that. Courtenay puts things in a brutal way, but he hits the nail on the head. In fact, there is no way, my poor darling, too brutal for describing certain facts. The one safe rule for women is to stick to

the traditions. Then she cannot be badly hurt."

"Talk to me as you would talk to another man. I should like that. Let us think that Rosabel is dead and buried. You keep on being Jim, and I will be—George."

This seemed to him dangerously fantastic, but he thought it more discreet to humour her.

"All right, then. You're George."

If despair can intoxicate—and let no one doubt that it does—she was intoxicated. Sleepless nights with tears and languid days of incessant disappointment had numbed her heart. A cry rang in her ears of "Woe! woe! woe! to the vanquished!" Carrie and the rest had always been right,—fatally, completely right. Rosabel's convictions had centred in Lutrel, and as he had seemed to fail, they withered too—like frail weeds in the summer-dust of vineyard paths. Oh the folly

and the evil ! The folly of believing and the evil of doing. Courage she might have had for an ideal, but she had none for an impulse which had proved in execution an act of misery.

“What would you say to a George who had made a great fool of himself over a love affair?”

“I should say, ‘Oh, come on: we’ve had enough of this. Let’s go to the Pamirs.’”

“I like that,” said Rosabel ; “why don’t they talk that way to a woman? Now I can think of a sensible answer to make. I should like uncommonly to go with you to the Pamirs—as George.”

“Then that’s settled?”

“Rather!”

Carrie, coughing, came into the room at this point with some beef-tea. Wroxall began—

“I know you will be glad to hear, dear Carrie”—

Carrie was on her knees by Rosabel's side before he could finish the sentence—

“My darling! How happy you will be! Isn't it glorious! Oh, how happy we shall all be! No tears, precious! God bless you. Thank God! thank God!”

CHAPTER IX

“ You must practise
The manners of the time, if you intend
To have favour from it.”

“ N’oserez vous, mon bel ami,
Je vous en prie.
N’oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,
N’oserez vous, mon bel ami.”

“ For to be gone were to destroy my life :
And to kill you were to destroy my soul.
I am in love, yet must not be in love.”

“ The world is rich in beautiful things : poor, very
poor, in beautiful moments : parsimonious in its revelation of either.”

“ Wonder ! It is more, Sir,
A rapture, an astonishment ! ”

THE news of Rosabel, Countess of Shortclough’s engagement to Lord Wroxall of Franton was received with sentiments of the liveliest satisfaction in every circle of good society. Especial admiration was ex-

pressed in the highest, most enlightened set, for the courageous admission that there would be no absurd parade of inconsolable grief at the decease of a husband who had been imbecile from the beginning, and technically buried for more than five years.

"Most sensible," said one highly distinguished personage to a most important Ambassador: "quite the best thing for her to do. No cant. Wroxall is a capital fellow."

"And just at the right moment," replied the most important Ambassador. "They would have been talked about in another six months. But Carrie Ceppel is such a clever woman!"

The world—with its instinct for its own—gave all the credit to Carrie. She became the heroine of the hour: Agrippina, after quelling the sedition at Teutburg, was too great a creature to have felt the self-elation Carrie now enjoyed at the success of her social triumph. Odo gave

her one more new carriage—a sort of small chariot with just room enough for herself, her billowy clothes, and her prize bull-terrier. In this chariot she drove from one dearest friend to another “for a heart-to-heart talk”; she ordered Rosabel’s trousseau (in the strictest Court mourning), arranged the quiet, quiet wedding; fixed a date before Lent because darling Rosabel was dreadfully delicate and Jim was so anxious about her lungs: he had secured the Marquis of Normorland’s yacht—the *Eros*—by the merest miracle: the happy pair—who had loved each other so long and faithfully—would go straight to the Isles of Greece, and there, in that divine scenery, the poor bride, after such crushing trouble and terrible experiences in her early years, would get to see that practically the whole of a useful life was before her.

“Life,” Carrie would say, as a kind of benediction, “is not so black, after all, as it is painted.”

Jim wrote letters to his old school-fellows, Lord Amington and Brigadier-General Reginald Warrand-Maclean, C. B., J. P., etc. To one he said,—“ I am not half good enough for her. I don't know what I have done to deserve her. I look a dreadful pre-historic fogey nowadays, and it will be Beauty and the Beast, I am afraid : ”—and to the other,—“ You always declared that it would come to this. I never thought so, although I am glad you were right, and I am sure you will be the first to say how very,” etc., etc., etc.

Rosabel remained in an apathetic state—sustained by the prescriptions of Sir Gunnerley Jones (who confided to the wife of his bosom that the whole affair seemed to him queer, to say the least). Susie, however, was chattering and giggling, and dancing around the invalid the greater part of each day. Harry Beauleigh brought flowers, and prettily bound editions of *The Christian Year*, *The Excursion*, *The*

Deserted Village, and *An Englishwoman's Love-Letters*. Rosabel was always glad to see the kind-hearted, sincere young man, and it was her one pleasure to hear him sing—with Susie—the duets from *Florodora*. When he declared, to a trembling accompaniment of nine quavers to a bar—

*"Fear not, my love will be ardent, ardent as now, love,
Far in a future day.*

*Fear not, my heart will be forgetting the vow my lip
shall truly say."*

no one would have doubted him for an instant. But Rosabel took no interest in the really charming things ordered by Carrie: she became peevish when poor Jim brought her the Wroxall rubies.

"A George can't wear ruby necklaces," she said. "There must be no deception, Jim. Rosabel is dead. I am always George now."

Unconsciously, she said much to him that Luttrell had said to her on the subject of straightforwardness. "I want no decep-

tion, no taking-in, no euphemism. I am in earnest. I do not talk at random. One mustn't drift."

Jim, nevertheless, was dogged, and he had lived in a sphere where people, no matter how perverse, always "came round" eventually to the approved standpoint. "Of course, she will come round," he told himself; "she's moody, that's all." Carrie asked Sir Gunnerley if he thought her sister's intellect was, say, less vigorous than the intellects of her family. Sir Gunnerley said he would like to confer with Dr. Harper-Carew. These gentlemen came to the conclusion that Lady Shortclough's intellect was a very good average intellect—given fair play. She had an emotional, neurotic temperament. They recommended kindness.

"We study her every whim: but she is so weak," insisted Mrs. Ceppel. She felt certain that the doctors thought her own character most admirable. "I have no

patience with these hysterical women," she informed them ; " they need a good dose of hard work. They are too wrapped up in themselves, and they feed on French novels." She, herself, hated reading, and did not know French. " I have never had a day's illness," she added.

" But," suggested Dr. Harper-Carew, " you did not marry a *crétin* when you were sixteen ! "

Both physicians preferred Rosabel, felt sorry for her, and suspected that there was a good deal of cruelty somewhere. The wedding-day came round. Rosabel, when her maid came to her that morning, said, " Is my hair white ? " The ceremony took place at St. Peter's, Eaton Square, in the presence of near relatives and a few very intimate friends of both families. We read, in fashionable journals of that day, how one Duchess wore a grey plume in her picture-hat, and another had a white tulle toque. But more important than all was

the renowned, unalterable velvet mantle lined with squirrel (Period 1887) of the Duchess of Beauleigh. She was there, sitting next to Lady Ragot (sweet and girlish in mousegrey), and Susie, lovely to behold in mauve *crépe-de-chine*. A Mr. Huxter was the best man. No one knew anything about him, but he was Wroxall's oldest friend, and he clung to Huxter—in spite of all Carrie's efforts. (Huxter made splendid salmon-flies, wrote for *The Field*, and was a country squire of perfect breeding, small means, and scholarly tastes.)

"He would have that deadly Huxter," sighed Carrie to Lady Ragot, all through the first hymn. The bride wore her going-away dress, and, as she walked up the aisle on Sir Courtenay's arm, a whisper went round that she was losing her looks.

"All the Ragots fade so quickly," said Lady De Morve (who had five unmarried girls) to Mrs. Augustus Renton, who had never faded because she had never bloomed.

But at last the ordeal was over. The statements "I, James Charles, take thee, Rosabel Sybil Gladys," and "I, Rosabel Sybil Gladys, take thee, James Charles" had been pronounced, solemnly blessed and ratified. Dear Archdeacon Colmore, who had known Rosabel as a small child, gave a touching, brief address on the holiness of the marriage bond. One passage was particularly admired, and quoted in most of the daily papers:—" *Simplicity in our lives, unselfishness in our loves, charity—above all, charity in our hearts—will make the humblest home a refuge from the buffets of Fate.*" The choir sang. "O perfect love," and the organist played—not the hackneyed March—but a selection from Verdi, who, having died recently, was interesting. This innovation was almost applauded, although some were not quite sure that they liked it. Lord and Lady Wroxall, after lunching with the party at Mrs. Ceppel's, left London for Portsmouth,

where the *Eros*, beautifully fitted up, was awaiting them.

"And when is that other marriage coming off?" said Mrs. Renton to the proud Sir Courtenay.

"Susie's? First Wednesday after Easter."

"That will be the third sister you have given away in the last eighteen months!" replied the old ogress. She did not receive an invitation to Susie's nuptials, although she sent her an extremely handsome fan from the Paris Exhibition.

Carrie, at the close of the day, was able to answer the following letter, which she had secured that morning:—

"THE HOTEL DE PARIS, MARSEILLES.

"MY DEAR LADY SHORTCLOUGH.—*What is to be done? Miss Luttrell writes that you are going to marry Lord Wroxall. I cannot believe it. I would believe it easily of many women but not of a woman who was loved, is still*

devotedly loved, by Jocelyn Luttrell. He is recovering from the injuries he received in that street riot. (He was hurt by trying to rescue others. You probably guessed this.) To save his own life and his reason, I have induced a friend to send me telegrams each day in your name. But he wonders why you do not come. He asks for letters. He would be allowed to read them now. Next week the doctors promise him that he may possibly be able to write a few lines. What is to be done? He will have to know the real facts presently. But what are the real facts? You give no explanation. I find myself confronted by something the bravest would not care to face. But he is not a sentimentalist: not a man to trifle with. There will be no answering him when he once knows, beyond a doubt, that you have broken your word. I entreat you to come, or at least to write.

"Yours sincerely,

"AMÉLIE TORRING-SEAFELD."

Mrs. Ceppel answered this appeal, which she considered most impertinent, in a dignified strain—

"9A CHESTERFIELD GARDENS, MAYFAIR, S.W.

"Mrs. Ceppel begs to say that Lady Wroxall is quite unable to make any reply to Mrs. Tor-

ring-Seafeld. Mrs. Ceppel is deeply pained to find herself compelled to speak so plainly, as she feels sure that Mrs. Tarring-Seafeld is actuated by the best motives towards her friend, Mr. Luttrell. Mrs. Ceppel cannot enter into any discussion with regard to Mr. Luttrell's extraordinary conduct and views. It would indeed be difficult to do so without reviving distressing matters best left in the bitterness of an unforgettable memory. Mrs. Ceppel judges no one, but it is impossible to be blind to the punishment which has already overtaken a man who had no scruple in sacrificing the happiness of several families to the mere gratification of his own vanity. Mrs. Tarring-Seafeld overlooks the fact that Lady Wroxall's one chance of earthly peace was almost wrecked by Mr. Luttrell's heartless, inconsiderate, selfish behaviour. Mrs. Ceppel will not conclude without expressing the hope, that, as one good result of so much suffering, Mr. Luttrell may be brought to a truer sense of right and wrong, falsehood and truth, and prove the sincerity of his remorse by refraining from any further molestation of the weak, ill-advised girl (she is little more) whose life he has certainly marred, and too nearly destroyed socially. Mrs. Ceppel places implicit reliance upon Mrs. Tarring-Seafeld's good faith, and will only add that she begs she will regard this communication as strictly private and confidential."

Carrie had no fear lest Amélie should send this letter to Odo or Lord Wroxall.

"She will fight it out with me," said Carrie to Sir Courtenay: "she won't do anything caddish!"

But Carrie now felt sure of her own position, in any event. Rosabel was married to Wroxall—nothing could alter that. The Duchess of Beauleigh had agreed most civilly to her son's engagement with Miss Susan Ragot, and Fortune seemed to shower favours upon the family. Wroxall was very rich: Ceppel was enormously rich: Beauleigh was rich enough. With money, and the right men, one might well defy whole legions of Tarring-Seafelds, and a great deal of gossip. She could snap her fingers at Amélie.

Amélie's suspicions had been roused for some little time, however, and Mrs. Ceppel's final letter seemed far too authoritative. Rosabel was not a young girl: she had shown herself fully able to decide between

her people and Luttrell. In the first instance, she had chosen Luttrell—apparently with no little show of audacity. Luttrell was getting better each day, and each day it became more difficult to frame replies to his eager questions. Rosabel: Rosabel: Rosabel: the name was rarely absent from his lips, and when he said nothing, he seemed to hold her image in his eyes. Amélie conferred with Beylestein. Beylestein said: "Tell him soothing tales till you get him back to London, otherwise he will turn pirate and follow the *Eros* in a fishing-smack!" This advice was sound. Two telegrams, signed "Rosabel," were delivered at the Hotel de Paris daily. Luttrell remembered that she was shy about writing letters (because she thought they were not clever enough), but he, fluent with his pen, sent her sheets of love-making in reply—which Carrie burnt unread. At last, the doctors thought he might safely travel. He arrived at his own house at

Queen Anne's Gate on the last Sunday in March, and insisted on driving that night to Chesterfield Gardens.

"I must see her."

"They are all out of town," said poor Amélie, holding Miss Luttrell's hand from sheer terror.

"Out of town?" said Luttrell. "Rosabel isn't out of town?"

"Dear Jocelyn, do be patient," murmured his sister.

"Are you trying to keep anything from me? Is she dead?" he asked.

"No! no! not dead," said Hildegarde. "How you frighten one!"

"Then what is it? I have thought there was something wrong for some time."

"Do, do be calm, dear Jocelyn. I am so upset by your manner that really I cannot hear myself think."

Then Amélie, summoning all her courage, broke the news in rapid, miserable phrases. When she had finished, he said nothing,

but she saw him glance toward his pistol-case.

"Not that!" she exclaimed.

He still said nothing, but stared in front of him with a sullen, forbidding expression which neither of the women understood. They were afraid to speak, and they were determined not to leave him. Luckily, he seemed to have forgotten their presence. They sat there the whole, terrible night, palsied with fear and forebodings of evil: Hildegarde wondered what this love was which made the best so mad, and Amélie lived again through the darkest miseries of her own life.

In the morning, Luttrell asked them suddenly—

"When does she come back?"

"I believe," said Hildegarde, "that she is expected in town in a day or two for Susie Ragot's wedding."

"What is the time now?"

"It is Monday. It is eight o'clock,"

said Amélie : "don't you hear the bugling ?"

To her surprise he answered quite cheerfully. She dared not know what to think of him. That he had formed some resolution was quite plain, and that the resolution would be carried out was certain.

The Wroxalls were in London two days later—at Claridge's Hotel. Rosabel talked about the people she had met at Cannes, and a statue (by Rodin) which she wanted Jim to buy. She was looking ill, however, and she saw no one. One evening, to please Wroxall, she agreed to dine downstairs in the restaurant. It would cheer her up, he said. They were going to their seats when she felt a note slipped into her hand.

"What's the matter?" said Wroxall rather sharply. He was always kind, but his temper had grown very irritable.

"I stepped on something."

"Your nerves seem no better," he sighed, and sat down, not observing a gentleman,

with an imperial, and side-whiskers, who occupied a table just behind him. He was accompanied by Mrs. Tarring-Seafeld.

Lady Wroxall tossed her head at this encounter. Her pride was in revolt ; she thought that Luttrell had sent this woman to press letters into her hand, and spy upon her. Jim had not seen her so charming, so thoughtful, so affectionate, so beautiful to look at since their marriage. Her gaiety was extraordinary.

"See how much better you are, darling," he said, when they returned to their own room.

"You mustn't call me *darling*," she answered gravely.

He sighed, said, "You are quite right," and read the *Pall Mall Gazette*, while she rushed away to read Luttrell's message—no matter what it contained. Yes, it was a message from Luttrell—in his own writing. When she caught sight of herself in the glass, and saw her bright eyes, her radiant

flush, the return of her youth in every feature, she had no doubt of the handwriting. There was no such magic in other pens.

"I will see you. Shall I call on you, or will you come to my house, or will you meet me anywhere? I prefer, in the circumstances, to call on you. I want you to explain yourself. I want to hear your explanation.—J. L."

To read this was more than all the iron of war, and whole plantations of cinchona. She became determined, reckless, fiery, indomitable—

"You shall hear my explanation," she wrote; "but I am not what I was. Expect plain speaking, indeed. If we were two men, it would be to the death. As I am, most unfortunately, a woman, my strength lies only in words. I have been driven to deeds. I regret nothing I have said: I shall regret nothing I may say. I regret most of the things I have done—because they were not of my own, but of necessity. It will be impossible to see you here, and I can suggest no other meeting-place than Queen

Anne's Gate. I shall come to-morrow at five o'clock.—

“*ROSABEL.*”

She had caught his own manner, and she felt that she was writing with her heart's blood. She hoped he would mark the expression, “I regret *most* of the things I have done.” She did not regret all of them—one wild adventure remained the reason of her existence,—the flight on the night of the February new moon. She had tossed away two worlds for him, and perhaps her soul. But her father—a desperate gambler in his time—had always been a superb loser. Crowds had waited patiently at Monte Carlo just to see him under a run of hard luck. A majestic lesson. Rosabel now had staked all, and lost. Luttrell, having taught her with such fatal eloquence the glory of high play, should learn from her how a woman could bear reverses. “No one's fault,” she intended to say: “my own decision, my own experi-

ment: the responsibility mine, the edge gained mine! I remain myself my own!" Altogether different, this is the usual complaint of the deserted who twists her favours into fetters will own herself a dupe in order to obtain an ignominious right to unwilling union. No training—no matter how enervating, false, or hypocritical, can destroy the simplicity of a genuine passion. *Bel* knew nothing about Greek words or Greek literature: she was merely a naïf example of the fact that Greek poets understood the eternal feminine nature in its depths. The weakest of creatures—she really loves—is proud: she offers excuses, feels no need of them, and never call herself deceived. But she really love.

"Take me, O stranger, for thine hand-maid
Or wife, or slave."

says *Andromeda* to her deliverer.
can imagine him shaking his head,

a short idyl, seeking out other captives of a like gratitude, we cannot imagine Andromeda pursuing him with threats. Calypso wove the sails for Odysseus's homeward voyage. The gods had ordered a farewell, but they did not command such magnanimity. Rosabel, without reading Homer, had as fair a spirit. Kindness: a certain wonder: no wrath.

At five the next day she drove openly, and for the first time in her life punctually, to Queen Anne's Gate. Luttrell was standing in the library where she had last seen him. He had a loaded pistol in the open drawer by his side; he had made up his mind to shoot her, and then blow his own brains out. The one possible comment on her impossible defence. He loved her mad courage in facing him—for she knew his nature, he believed. But he loved her too well in any case—with courage, or lacking it.

They looked at each other, and while he

looked, he closed the drawer containing the pistol. Not that, yet. Perhaps . . . she might have something to say.

"At first, I wanted to kill myself," she began, "but I thought I might look awful afterwards and you would see me."

"Never mind your looks! This is no question of looks. Why aren't you dead? It would have been so much better for both of us, if you were."

"I hoped. I hoped you would come. As Carrie says, I don't really give in. But you have come back. This is you. I was right, and they were all wrong. I was right. I wish you had not come too late. If you had only written"—

"Written!" he said scornfully. "I wrote all day. As if writing could have made any difference!"

"One word from you would have been enough. It never came. Don't act, Lyn. Perhaps you feel vexed with yourself. Love isn't common. While one has it, and

is sure of it, one may think one can find it anywhere. This is a mistake men make. Women, in that respect, have an instinct. They don't go so wrong."

"Do you talk to me about love? *You?*"

"I do. That is the one right I have in the world. I may talk to you, as you say, about love."

"Have you forgotten me? Do you remember anything at all about me? How much patience do you suppose I can count on? As for acting—what do you think of yourself? I imagined several meetings. This meeting is worse than any night-mare. It's simply hellish. It's an encounter between a liar and a madman—both damned."

She went up to him, and put her arms around his neck.

"If we had never talked—and only trusted!" she said. "I feel—in spite of everything—that we are all right. It's what we say: it's what other people say that seems all wrong."

The touch was irresistible. He held her, saying—

“I meant to shoot you. You seemed too false to live.”

“I was never false, never. I was in despair. I thought you had failed me. Oh, Lyn, you did fail me. I ought to show more pride. I ought to say good-bye forever. Yet when I look in your eyes, I would die for you. But I want to die. I cannot be as I am now.”

Then, by degrees, she told her story. They traced all Carrie’s falsehoods, and most unfortunately included Lord Wroxall in the conspiracy. Luttrell thought him the vilest of the lot.

“Poor Jim! And I thought he was the magnificent one,” said Rosabel.

“Of course,” said Luttrell, “you shall never see any of them again.”

Here she displayed a strength of mind truly amazing.

“I have done so much for Susie—wait

till she is married. I know them all now, but Susan and Harry are good. They are worth everything. Let them marry."

"And do you see any future for human beings in your family? Could any man or any woman keep sane in such an atmosphere?"

"Harry's people are all nice, a little fussy and narrow,—they will be shocked at me,—but they are nice. They are honourable, straight-going"— She paused and sighed: "I wish I could be called straight-going!"

"Never mind," said he, "never mind. We'll do our best—out there!"

"Yes, we'll do our best. But marriage—with all the drawbacks—is the easiest arrangement. The other fails when there is an emergency, or illness. You feel you have no position—no standing-room."

"That is so—the world being what it is. Still, with a little courage and an eternity of contempt"—

"No contempt, dearest," she said quickly:

"but sympathy. We must say to people who think badly of us—'I know what you mean. Try and see what we mean;' and then, if they won't try,—well, no doubt, we shall still manage to get along."

"Let us show the world that we are in earnest!"

"The world? We cannot surprise the world. If I give you the power to break my heart, to desert me, to make me jealous, or ridiculous, or despicable—what is that to the world?"

"Rosabel! what are you saying?"

"Things I have learnt during the last few weeks! Yes, dearest, women must always make the bad, the deplorable, the atrocious bargain. And when they don't even demand the poor little legal claim—the claim to be thought and treated as respectable creatures, at any rate, well, then, they are fools indeed—in the world's opinion."

"There is no question of a bargain. It

is wholly a question of choosing the man."

"No ! no ! one doesn't choose whom one will love. I happen to be more fortunate than most women. I can be certain that you won't desert me, or break my heart. But you come of a good sound Puritan stock—fidelity is in your blood. You belong to generations of those who acknowledged the laws, and obeyed them. What of the children, and the children's children, of a generation of law-breakers ? Ah, I am not so silly as I was. A long illness is so good for one's intelligence."

"You never talked in this bitter way. I won't answer you."

"I see what I am doing. Oh, I am not drawing back. But it is handing your opponent all the trumps at the beginning of a game. Not that our life together is a game—to us ; but it is one to the lookers-on. It will never be anything else—to them ! That's the punishment."

"The punishment?"

"Yes, the constant, incurable punishment. It followed swiftly, didn't it?"

She went back to Claridge's, and found Carrie waiting for her.

"How well you look!" said Carrie.

"I have seen Lyn," said Rosabel.

Carrie looked as though she expected to be struck, and actually cowered. Not receiving the blow, she became insolent.

"I thought as much. We can't save you. We did our best."

"No," said Rosabel, "you can't save me."

Carrie repeated all she could remember of a Lenten Sermon on Duty, and, rustling her skirts, left her sister. In five minutes she returned.

"Susie," she said, "knows nothing. Do you intend to tell her?"

"No," answered Rosabel: "be quite at ease about Susie."

Carrie was so relieved that she wanted to kiss Rosabel and make it up.

"You see," said she, "we were sure that you weren't quite yourself. We didn't want you to spoil your life if we could help it. What had *we* to gain, after all?"

"You haven't made things easier."

Carrie opened her eyes.

"How can you be so ungrateful? I should call everything perfect. If you are even ordinarily prudent, I don't see why . . . but really, you are quite able to arrange your own affairs. Jim is awfully easy-going if you don't absolutely cram . . . some annoyance . . . down his throat. I don't go in for that kind of thing myself: I think it wrong, and idiotic; besides, I don't think it pays anybody."

"I wish you would go, Carrie."

"Dear me! I'm only trying not to make you feel uncomfortable! Good-night!"

Rosabel attended Susie's wedding, and she took the congregation by storm. The little bride was lovely, but not a Lady Wroxall. Oh no! Lady Wroxall was

probably the most beautiful woman in England. How she had improved! Where was Wroxall? Laid up with a bad cold—and he hated weddings.

When she returned to the hotel, Wroxall was sitting by the fire with a rug over his knees.

“Don’t forget your tonic,” said he, before he asked a question.

She smiled brilliantly—“My tonic! The last dose”—and swallowed it without a shudder.

Wroxall watched her till he grew sick with unhappiness. They had scarcely exchanged a word during the last week: she did not sulk, but there seemed to be nothing to say.

“Marriage is a great experiment,” he said suddenly: “Harry and Sue will probably hit it off very well.”

“They love each other.”

“That’s the great thing, of course. Although I know many men who are

thoroughly contented, model husbands—who were never in love in their lives. And many women—excellent wives—are just the same.”

“Those are the people for whom this world was made !”

“You look well, dear. I wish I could feel that you were as happy as you appear.”

She threw him an icy glance, not because she was cruel, but because she believed that he too had told her lies about Luttrell, and kept back her letters. And she had thought him—“the magnificent one.” So great was her disillusion that she dared not approach him on the subject. Next to Luttrell, he was the friend she loved best in the world. And now Jim, too, was treacherous. The knowledge that she had been wilfully ill-used had made her gentle—not at all vindictive. She found herself considering Carrie, Sir Courtenay, Wardle, and Jim, with curiosity rather than anger. She did

not doubt that they were serene in their hearts. They thought they were justified. "What thing is shameful if a man's heart feels it no shame?" was a very old plea before it became famous. Unkindness will always make kind natures thoughtful. Rosabel became speculative in her attitude toward humanity. Unlike the majority, her soul ripened under persecution. She would not quarrel. "I can quarrel with myself: I might quarrel with Lyn: but I will no longer quarrel with my family, or with Jim. We are intimate strangers. We must be courteous always." Thus she reasoned.

When Wroxall went to dress for dinner, Rosabel's maid, with a scared face, met him in the corridor.

"What's the matter, Adèle?"

"Her ladyship has gone out, my lord."

She gave him a note, but he had not the courage to read it till an hour later. He turned it over, studied the rather childish handwriting, the seal in violet wax,

and her own motto—" *Qui me cherche, trouve.*"

This is what he finally read—

"*JIM,—I have gone back to Jocelyn. He has given away nearly all his money to the Socialists, and we are going to live in Nuremberg very simply—for a long time. You cannot be surprised. I have been so much deceived. I deceived nobody. I never did anything unfair. You all knew everything about me, and Jocelyn's views were well known even when he was at Balliol. People say that if you cannot have happiness lawfully, you mustn't take it unlawfully. But what about unlawful UNHAPPINESS? Is one to sit down and bear it? They made me marry poor Shortclough. I was sixteen, and bullied. What did I know? I knew he wouldn't bully me, and he didn't. He was quite kind while his poor brain lasted. You know all the rest. I won't reproach you. I am trying to understand you. But if you had really loved me, Jim, you could not have looked on at my despair without saying one word of the truth. We shall all have to suffer, so let us all try to be fair—now, at least, and think kind thoughts,*

ROSABEL."

She had misjudged him, and the error

made it easier for her to follow Luttrell, poverty-stricken, through Europe. But Wroxall, reading her letter with anguish and a devotion tuned high above egoism or the chords of vanity, knew that she must have followed the Piper in any case. She would never have come round—never, never. It was a hard admission. Such an admission faced in solitude has one great gift for its many horrors. The whole world, grinning, hooting, nudging seems a slight thing ever afterwards.

On this affair an enormous amount of talk was expended. Carrie's friends said that "she was such a snob and so pushing that it was quite impossible to feel sorry for her." Sir Courtenay's friends said: "Well, it was always very difficult for him." Wroxall's friends usually said that "if a man was ass enough to marry a woman not half his age who, anyone could see with half an eye, didn't care a rush about him—well!"

Huxter took him to Ireland, where they angled for whole weeks without uttering a syllable. Rosabel's acquaintances said, "What could you expect from such a bringing-up? And she never had any nice friends. She was so weak-minded, too!" Archie Wardle made a *succès-fou* whispering to the decorous: "I am so sick of women who think they are like *Guinevere*! I really prefer these Socialists who make a clean bolt. It's more breezy, and much more expensive—when you come to think of it! He! he!" The Dowager Duchess of Beauleigh, to everybody's surprise, defended her right and left, up hill and down dale. She declared that there was something to be said for her. She herself never said that something, but one of her glances went a long way. Once she got as far as—"That young woman's heart was not all bad. She might have been reached—had she been taken in time." Many virtuous ladies would have been almost willing to